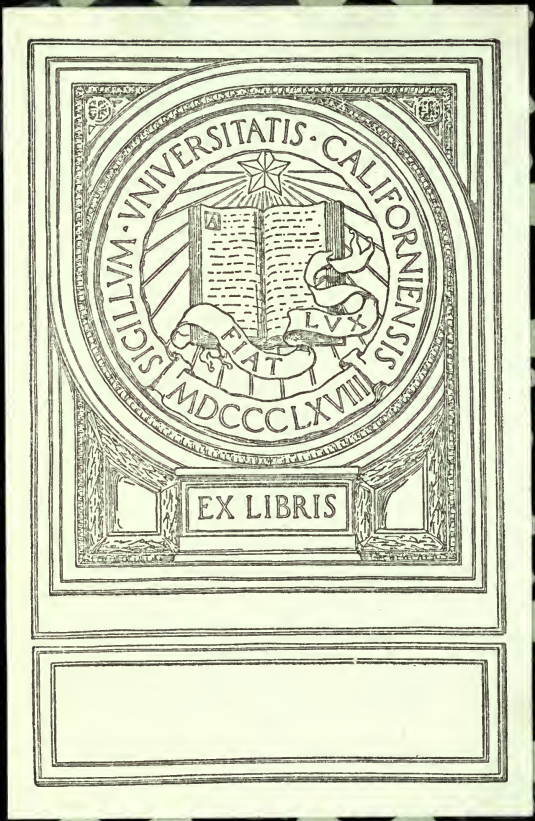
THE FAIR REWARDS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THE FAIR REWARDS

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NEW BORZOI NOVELS

SPRING, 1922

WANDERERS
Knut Hamsun
MEN OF AFFAIRS
Roland Pertwee
THE FAIR REWARDS
Thomas Beer
I WALKED IN ARDEN
Jack Crawford
GUEST THE ONE-EYED
Gunnar Gunnarsson
THE GARDEN PARTY
Katherine Mansfield
THE LONGEST JOURNEY
E. M. Forster
THE SOUL OF A CHILD
Edwin Björkman
CYTHEREA
Joseph Hergesheimer
EXPLORERS OF THE DAWN
Mazo de la Roche
THE WHITE KAMI
Edward Alden Jewell

THE FAIR REWARDS

THOMAS BEER

"Tell arts they have no soundness
But vary by esteeming
Tell schools they want profoundness
And stand too much on seeming"—

RALEGH

"Eh, sirs," says Koshchei, "I contemplate the spectacle with appropriate emotions."

NEW YORK
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
1922

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

M. A. A. B.

M202386

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I

Manufacture of a Personage

JOHN CARLSON began the rehearsals of "Nicoline" in early August of 1895. For a week he tried to correct the hot labours of the whole, large company. He was nervous about this production. His digestion interfered. His temper grew explosive. The leading woman was alarmed for her gentility. The leading man disliked his part of a cheap rake. Carlson abandoned the minor folk to his stage manager, Rothenstein, and nursed these two clumsy celebrities toward a certain ease. But his stomach suffered. He attended the opening night of "The Prisoner of Zenda" at the Lyceum, fainted during the second act and was revived with brandy in Mr. Frohman's office. The brandy gave him fever; he spent the six days remaining before "Nicoline" opened, in his bed. Yet on a warm Monday night he dressed his gaunt body gorgeously, shaved his yellow face, thrust an orchid into his coat and dined at Martin's with young Mr. Fitch who had adapted "Nicoline" from the French. Carlson swore in Swedish

when agony seized his stomach. Mr. Fitch, sipping white Burgundy, observed that it must be pleasant to swear incomprehensibly.

"Sure," said Carlson, shivering, "but what was you sayin'?"

"You'll feel better by midnight," Mr. Fitch murmured, "You've worried too much. This'll be a hit. It's been a hit in London and Paris. The critics"—the adapter smiled—"won't dare say anything worse than that it's immoral. And Cora Boyle will make them laugh in the third act, so that'll be safe."

"Boyle? Who's she? That black headed gal that plays the street walker, y'mean? She's no good. Had her last winter in Mountain Dew. Common as dirt and no more sense than a turnip."

Mr. Fitch answered in his affable whisper, "Of course she's common as dirt. That's why I asked you to get her. Why waste time training some one to be common when the town's full of them?"

"But that ain't actin', Clyde!"

"It's quite as good. And," Mr. Fitch declared, "she's what the women like."

"You always talk as if women made a show pay!"

"That happens to be just what they do, Mr. Carlson. That's why Richard the Third doesn't

make as much money as Camille or East Lynne. Women come to a play to see other women wear clothes they wouldn't be seen in and do things they wouldn't dream of doing. Please try to eat something."

"You're all wrong," Carlson said, chewing a pepsin tablet.

Mr. Fitch shrugged, arranged his moustaches and mentioned a dozen actresses whose success was built on the art of enchanting their own sex. Carlson had a respect for this playwright's opinion and while the two early acts of "Nicoline" played he saw from his box that Cora Boyle's swagger carried some message to the female part of the audience. For her, women laughed loudly. They merely sniffled over the well bred woes of the heroine. The heroine's antics were insupportable. The second curtain fell and Carlson descended to the dressing room of this unsatisfactory gentlewoman, gave a rasping lecture that scared her maid away. He had to help hook her gown and yelled over the powder of her advertised shoulders, "If you want that sassy Boyle gal to be the hit of the show, go on! You act like you'd lost your last cent on the races and had sand in your shoes. Now, you!" A feeling of heated blades in his stomach stopped the speech. He heard the stage manager knock on the dressing room door. The actress moved weeping past his

anguish. He leaned on the table and saw his sweating face in the tilted mirror. The thin, remote music of the orchestra began behind the curtain. This third act was set in the rowdy café of a small French city. If it went well, the play was safe, would last out the winter, make him richer. He should go up to his box and show himself unperturbed to rival managers civilly tranquil in their free seats. But he leaned, looking at his wet, bald head with a sick weariness. What was the use of this trade? He wore down his years trying to teach silly women and sillier men to act. He got nothing from living but stomach trouble and money. The money would go to his sister in Stockholm when he died. He had never liked his sister, hadn't seen her in thirty years. He pitied himself so extremely that tears wriggled down the spread of seams in his yellow face. Life was an iniquity contrived for his torture. Carlson deeply enjoyed his woe for five minutes. Then Mr. Fitch came in to urge that Cora Boyle be corrected before her present entrance.

"What's the good, Clyde? She ain't any sense. She's a actress, ain't she?"

"She'll spoil the act if she carries on too much," said Mr. Fitch and at once Carlson thrilled with an automatic anxiety; the act mustn't be spoiled. He hurried up the iron stairs to the platform,

wiping his face. Cora Boyle was standing ten feet back from the canvas arch that was, for the audience, the street door of the Café Printemps. She patted the vast sleeves of her gaudy frock and whispered to a fellow in blue clothes. Carlson had to pull her from these occupations and gave his orders in a hiss.

"Don't you laugh too loud when Miss Leslie's tellin' about her mother or talk as loud as you've been doin', neither. This ain't a camp meetin', hear?"

The black haired girl grinned at him, nodding. She spat out a fold of chewing gum and patted her pink sleeves again. She said, "All right, boss, but, say, don't the folks like me, though?"

Fitch chuckled behind the manager. Carlson wouldn't be bested by an impudent hussy who was paid thirty-five dollars a week and didn't earn it. He stared at Cora Boyle, biting his lips and hunting words wherewith to blast her. She let him stare unchecked. A false diamond on its thin chain glittered and slid when she breathed into the cleft of her breasts. She was excellently made and highly perfumed. Her black eyes caught a vague point of red from the rim of a jaunty hat that slanted its flowers on the mass of her hair. She had rouged her chin to offset a wide mouth. Carlson jeered, "Better get somebody to show you a good makeup, sister, and quit

talkin' through your nose. You sound like you're out of New Jersey!"

Cora Boyle giggled. She glanced at the fellow in blue and said, "I was boardin' at Fayettesville, New Jersey, all summer. Wasn't I, Mark?"

The fellow bobbed his head, shuffling his feet. His feet were bare and by that sign Carlson knew him for the supposed peasant lad who would bring the heroine news of her dear mother's death at the end of the act. Cora Boyle gave this unimportant creature a long, amorous look, then told Carlson, "I was boardin' with Mark's folks. He—"

"Your cue," said Mr. Fitch and the girl, with a splendid swagger, marched into the lit scene beyond this nervous shadow. Her finery shimmered and directly the women outside the hedge of footlights laughed. The audience tittered at her first line and Mr. Fitch, a hand on his moustache, smiled at Carlson.

"She's got a voice like a saw," Carlson snapped and walked down the steps. At the bottom a roar halted him. The audience laughed in a steady bawl. He grunted but the noise came in repeating volleys every time the girl's shrill speech rose grinding and these bursts had an effect of surging water wonderful to hear, soothing his conceit. But as he listened a spasm took his stomach. Fitch helped him to a cab

and the cab delivered Carlson trembling to his valet in 18th Street.

The attack lasted all night and did not wane until twilight of next day when Carlson could drink some drugged milk and roll a cigarette. He bade his valet bring up the morning papers and was not surprised when Fitch preceded the man into the room, walking silently on his trim feet, a flower in his blue coat and his white hands full of scribbled foolscap.

"I've been writing two scenes in the library," he said, in his usual, even whisper, "and I'd like to read them, if you feel well enough."

"Two scenes?"

"One's for the first act and one's for the last. I'd like a full rehearsal in the morning, too."

Carlson lifted himself and slapped the counterpane. He cried, "Now, Clyde, listen here! That Boyle gal's got enough. I expect she hit but she's a sassy little hen. I'm not goin' to spoil her with—"

"Nom de dieu," said the playwright, "I didn't say anything about the Boyle girl. No. These scenes are for young Walling. He can come on with some flowers for Nicoline in the first act and say something. Then he can bring the dogs in at the last, instead of the maid. We might dress him as a gamekeeper in the last act. Green coat, corduroy breeches—"

Carlson screamed, "Cord'roy pants? Who the hell you talkin' about? Walling? Who's Walling?"

Mr. Fitch lit a cigar and selected a paper from the bundle the valet held. He bent himself over the back of a cherry velvet chair which turned his suit vile purple in the dusk and began to read genially. . . . " 'Into the sordid and sensuous atmosphere of this third act there came a second of relief when the messenger brought Nicoline news of her mother's death. We too rarely see such acting as Mr. Walling's performance of this petty part. His embarrassed, sympathetic stare at Nicoline, his boyish, unaffected speech—' " The playwright laughed and took another paper, "That's William Winter. Here's this idiot. 'This little episode exactly proves the soundness of Carlson's method in rehearsing a company. I am told that Mark Walling, the young actor who plays the rôle, has been drilled by Mr. Carlson as carefully as though he were a principal'—I told him that," Mr. Fitch explained, changing papers. " 'One of the best performances in the long list of forty was that of Mark Walling as'—"

Carlson lay back dizzy on his pillows and snarled, "What's it all about, for hell's sake? This feller comes on and gives the gal the letter and says the funeral'll be next day. Well?"

"Well," said his ally, "I'd just put you in your

cab. I was out in front, standing. This boy came on. They were still laughing at Cora Boyle. The minute Walling spoke, every one shut up. He gave his line about the funeral and some women commenced snivelling. Wiped his nose on his sleeve. Some more women cried. I thought they'd applaud for a minute. He's in all the papers. Nice voice. It's his looks mostly."

"Never noticed him. Where did we get him?"

Mr. Fitch blew some smoke toward the red velvet curtains and chuckled. "We didn't get him. He belongs to Cora Boyle. She brought him to Rothenstein at the first rehearsal and asked for a part for him. She kidnapped him down in Jersey."

"She—what?"

"Kidnapped him." The playwright assumed a high drawl and recited, "Cora, she was boardin' with Mark's folks down to Fayettesville. Mark, he used to speak pieces after supper. Cora, she thought he spoke real nice—So she kidnapped him. She mesmerized him—like Trilby—and brought him along. She's got him cooped up at her boarding house. She's married him. He says he thinks acting's awful easy"—Mr. Fitch again drawled, "cause all you gotta do is walk out, an' speak your piece. He's got a brother

name of Joe and his mamma she's dead and sister Sadie she's married to Eddie something or other. I heard his whole family tree. I went to see him this morning. Some one else is likely to grab him, you know? He told me his sad story in a pair of blue drawers and one sock. He's scared to death of Cora Boyle."

"But—can he act?"

The playwright shook his head. "No. He hasn't any brains. Are you well enough to get dressed?"

At half past ten an usher came into the box office where Carlson was sitting and summoned the manager to the rear of the house. Fitch stood at the throat of an aisle, his pallor made orange by the glow from the stage on which Cora Boyle was chaffing the sinful heroine. Amusement sped up this lustrous, stirring slope of heads. It was the year of Violette Amère among perfumes and the scent rolled back to Carlson with the laughter of these ninnies who took Cora Boyle for a good comedian. Carlson chafed, but when the lad in blue walked into the light of the untinted globes, this laughter flickered down. Fitch whispered, "Hear?" and promptly the boy spoke in a husky, middling voice that somehow reached Carlson clearly. Close by a woman gurgled, "Sweet!" and Carlson felt the warm attention of the crowd, half understood it

as the few lines drawled on. The boy stood square on his brown, painted feet. His flat face was comely. He had dull red, curling hair. As he tramped out there was a faint and scattered rumour like the birth of applause, cut by the heroine's shriek.

"You see?" Fitch smiled.

Carlson said, "I ain't a fool. Tell Rothenstein to call a rehearsal for ten in the mornin', will you." He then went briskly to hunt down this asset. It took some minutes to locate the dressing room Mark Walling shared with five other small parts. He found Mark peeled to faded, azure cotton underclothes and talking happily to a tall, fair rustic who slouched on the wall beside the sink where Mark scrubbed paint from his feet with a sponge. Their drawls mixed and shut from them the noise of Carlson's step, so the manager regarded his prize stealthily. Mark was a long lad, limber and burly, harmlessly good looking. His nose was short. His insteps and arms were thick with muscle. He smiled up at his rural friend who said, "But it ain't a long trip, Bud. So I'll get your papa to come up nex' week."

Mark shifted the sponge to his other hand and sighed. The sound touched Carlson who hated actors not old enough to court him cleverly. But this was a homesick peasant. He listened

to Mark's answer of, "Wish you would, Eddie. I ain't sure papa likes my bein' here. Even if I do—"

The rustic saw Carlson and mumbled. Mark Walling hopped about on one foot and gave a solemn, frightened gulp. Carlson nodded, inquiring, "That your brother, sonny?"

"No, sir. Joe's home. This is Eddie Bernamer. Well, he's my brother-in-law. He's married with Sadie."

Eddie Bernamer gave out attenuated sounds, accepting the introduction. The manager asked lightly, "How many sisters have you, son?"

"Just Sadie. She's out lookin' at the play."

"And you've married Cora Boyle?"

"Well," said Mark, "that's so."

He seemed rather puzzled by the fact, suspended the sponge and said to Eddie Bernamer, "She ain't but two years older'n me, Eddie."

"I guess Mr. Carlson wants to talk to you, Bud," his relative muttered, "So I'll go on back and see some more."

"But you'll come round an' wait after the show?" Mark wailed.

"We'll have to catch the cars, Bud. Well, goo' bye."

Mark stood clutching the sponge and sighed a monstrous, woeful exhalation after Eddie Ber-

namer. His grey eyes filled. He was hideously homesick, certain that Fayettesville was a better place than this cellar that stunk of sweated cloth and greasy paint. And Cora hadn't been strikingly pleased by the news of him in this morning's papers. She was odd. He wiped his nose on a wrist and looked hopelessly at Carlson.

"Rather be back on the farm, wouldn't you?" the gaunt man asked.

Mark sat down on the floor and thought. His thoughts went slowly across the track of six weeks. He plodded. For all its demerits this red and gold theatre was thrilling. People were jolly, kind enough. The lewd stagehands had let him help set a scene tonight. The man who handled the lights had shown him how they were turned on and off to make stormy waverings. Cora was exciting. Winter at home was plagued by Aunt Edith who came out from Trenton to spend the cold months at the farm and who lectured Mark's father on Methodism. And here was this easy, good job. If he worked hard it might be that Mr. Carlson—who wasn't now the screaming beast of rehearsals—would let him run the lights instead of acting. Mark said, "Well, no. Just as soon stay here, I guess."

"How old are you, sonny?"

"Goin' on seventeen, sir."

"I'll give you forty a week to stay here," said

Carlson, "Fitch tells me you think acting's pretty easy."

"I don't see any trick to acting," Mark mused, absorbing the offer of forty dollars a week, "There ain't nothin' to it but speakin' out loud. . . . Yes, I'd like to stay here." He wanted to show himself useful and got up, pointing to the bulbs clustered on the ceiling in a bed of tin, "I should think you'd ought to save money if you had them down here by the lookin' glasses instead of this gas, y'see? The fellers don't get any good of the electric light while they're puttin' paint on, and—"

"Rehearsal at ten in the morning," said Carlson, "Good-night."

Marked gaped at the black and empty door. Then his homesickness swelled up and he sighed, squeezing the sponge. His body trembled drearily. He lowered his head as does a lonesome calf turned into strange pastures.

II

He Progresses

"NICOLINE" lasted until April, 1896. Mark played the country boy in "Mr. Bell" all the next season and, duly coached by Sarah Cowell LeMoyne, figured as the young duke in "The Princess of Croy" when Carlson imported that disaster in the autumn of 1897. Its failure afflicted Mark less than his private griefs. He played for four months in Carlson's Boston stock company. This was penible. He had never been so far from his adored family. True, freed of Cora, he could send ten or twenty dollars a week to his father but he missed Sundays in Fayettesville and the Boston wind gave him chilblains. The friendly women of the Stock Company found him shy and here began the legend of Mark's misogyny. He read novels and tramped about Boston, surveyed the theatrical setting of Louisburg Square and sidelong admired the ladies walking rigidly in sober hats on Commonwealth Avenue. Such persons, he mused, would never fling hot curling irons in a husband's face and it wasn't possible to imagine them smoking cig-

arettes in bed. But he hated Boston and the war was welcome as it honourably pulled him back to a New Jersey Infantry regiment.

In June, 1898, he sat on a palmetto trunk in the filthy camp of Tampa watching Eddie Bernamer pitch a ball to Joe Walling. Mark had every satisfaction in the sight and liked his piebald uniform much more than any costume hitherto. The camp pleased him as a problem. There would be plays made on the war, of course, and it wouldn't be easy to mount them. These bright trees and the muddle of railroad ties could be effected but the theatre lacked lights to send down this parching glitter on black mud and strolling men. He sighed for realism. He had spent hours in Davidge's workshop while the grass of "The Princess of Croy" was being made. It hadn't the right sheen. The sunset had turned it blue and the sunset was all wrong even though the critics had praised it. Mark swung his gaiters and pondered irreproducible nature. But it would be nice to counterfeit all this—the glister of remote tin roofing, the harsh palms, the listless soldiery. The police would object to exactness of course. Brother Joe was pitching the ball with great flexures of his bronze, naked chest. Eddie Bernamer swore astoundingly when he ripped his undershirt. One couldn't be so honest on the stage or echo the sharp, unreal note of

mail call sounding. Mark ran off to see if the wayward postal service had brought him a letter. There was a roll of newspapers addressed to his brother-in-law and Bernamer, a bad reader, turned them over to Mark and Joe. It was Joe who found the pencilled paragraph Mark rather expected. He slapped Mark's back and grunted, "Well, so there y'are, Bud."

Mark read, "The suit for divorce begun by Mark Walling, the well known young actor against his wife, Cora Boyle Walling, was concluded yesterday. Neither party to the action was present in court. Miss Boyle is touring the West with the Jarvis Hope Stock Company. Jarvis Hope is named as co-respondent in the case. The action was not defended. Mr. Walling is now with the —th N. J. Infantry. The divorced couple were married in August, 1895. They have no children."

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," said Eddie Bernamer, "and don't you let the next woman looks at you haul you off to a preacher, neither."

Mark felt dubious. There had never been a divorce in the family. He said, "I guess if we'd had a baby, she wouldn't of—Dunno . . . . It's kind of too bad."

His relatives denied it. They had never liked Cora Boyle. She wasn't a lady and her clothes had shocked Sadie's conservative mind. They

pointed out that a stable and meritorious woman wouldn't have seduced Mark before marriage. They were glad to see the boy free and were puzzled by his mournfulness. He agreed with their judgments. But his eyes moistened for all their affectionate pawing. He muttered, "She was awful good lookin'," and sat moody while they indicated advantages. He could save his pay, now, and wear respectable, black neckties, as a Walling should. He wouldn't be bullied or have hot curling irons flung in his face. He could come home on the Saturday midnight train and stay until Monday afternoon. And Joe reasonably assured him that women were plentiful. But Mark mourned, in his tangled fashion, the collapse of beauty. Cora, he choked, didn't match her outside. She was ruthless, disturbing. She cared nothing for Mark's pet plan of an ideal lighting system for theatres. She had spilled coffee on his smudged, laborious chart of a stage to be made in hinged parts. She called his sacred family a parcel of mossbacks and left the flat when Sadie and Bernamer brought their baby to town for a day. Still, Mark was mournful and often missed her for several years. He shuddered from marriage as a game more complicated than golf.

He was playing golf in May, 1902, with Ian Gail when the English playwright checked his

grammar. Mark flushed. The Englishman fooled with a putter for a second, considering this colour. He said, "I say, old son, d'you mind my giving you some advice?"

"Go ahead."

"Carlson's closing the play next week, he tells me. What will you do with yourself, all summer?"

"Go home."

"Where's that and what's it like?"

Mark sat down on the green and chattered of the farm, and his family with particular mention of his nephew George Dewey Bernamer (born May 15, 1898) who called himself Gurdy. About Joe Walling's baby daughter Mark wasn't as yet enthusiastic. He talked with broad lapses into New Jersey singsong. His grey eyes dilated. He babbled like an upset pail. The lean Englishman didn't seem bored. Other people—Mrs. LeMoyne, old Mrs. Gilbert—had scolded Mark about these explosions. Gail let him talk for twenty minutes of warm noon and then said, "Quite right, old son. Stick to your people. . . . You're a sentimental ass, of course. I dare say that's why you can put up with dinner at Carlson's in that seething mass of red plush."

"But I like Mr. Carlson. Been mighty good—"

"Of course he's good to you. And it was good of you to make him mount my last act so

decently. . . . For some reason or other you've an eye for decoration. That's by the way.—Now, I've a female cousin in Winchester, a Mrs. Ilden. She writes bad novels that no one reads and her husband's in the Navy. I'm going to write her about you. You run across after the play stops. She'll put you up for a month and you'll pay her—I suggest a hundred pounds."

"Pay her for what?"

"Her conversation, my boy. She's quite clever and fearfully learned. Shaw likes her. She's an anarchist and a determinist and all that and much older than you. She makes a business of tutoring youngsters who need—doing over a bit. You seem to have been reared on Henty and Shakespeare. Even Carlson says you need pruning. There's no use being antediluvian even if you are a rising young leading man. . . . God, how I hate the breed! I shouldn't waste these words on you if you didn't show vagrom gleams of common sense now and then. So I most seriously beg of you to go and let Olive—Mrs. Ilden, tutor you for a fortnight."

Mark was always docile before authority. He asked, "What'll she do to me?"

"She can tell you anything you want to know and explain Winchester. The history of Winchester is the history of England," Gail said, "and, of course, that's the history of the world."

Thus, in early June, Mark was driven through Winchester and landed at the door of a brick house painted plum colour. A grey wall continued on either side of the ruddy front and nameless vines waved on the coping. Mark's head ached from a supper at Romano's the night previous but he admired the house and the obvious romance of the curving lane stippled with sunshine in plaques of honey. He rang the bell, gave a fat parlour-maid his card and waited for Mrs. Ilden in stolid terror. The hall had white panels of an approved stage pattern and was dotted with photographs. Mark was looking at the face of a bearded man whose eyebrows had a diabolic slant when Olive Ilden came in from her garden.

She came in a bad temper, deserting the discussion of Chamberlain's Imperial policy about her tea table. She was prepared for a repetition of her last paying pupil, the one son of a Rand millionaire, a cub who wore five rubies on one hand and who talked racing at four meals a day. Mark unsettled her by his wooden stare and the black decency of his dress. His clothes were English. He was always tanned. The scar of Cora Boyle's curling irons lay in a thread along his left jaw. Olive revised a theory that Americans were short and looked up at him.

"I've some friends at tea," she said, "Of

course, I don't wish to impose tea on a Yankee."

"I think I'd like some," Mark said miserably and followed her trailing, white skirts down an endless garden. He thought her gown distinctly bad and sloppy. She must be older than she looked or she wouldn't be so careless. The girdle was crooked and the gauze across her shoulders was too tight. But it was a fine body, tall and proportionate. Her hair was a lustreless black. Meanwhile he had to think about this scene of an English garden. It phrased itself simply. Wall, rear. Tower of church, right background. Two small children playing with a kitten. Tea-table. Three ladies. Young man in tweeds. One clergyman.—It was like the garden set for the "Princess of Croy." Mark braced himself, bowed and murmured in the manner of Mrs. LeMoyne, leaned on one of the limes in the manner of Herbert Kelcey, and drank his tea in the manner of Mr. Drew. The minor canon gave him a cigarette and Mark said, "Thanks so much." The youth in tweeds asserted that it was beastly hot for June and Mark admitted, "Rather." He stood sombre against the lime and the group was chilled by his chill. Two of the ladies fancied him a poet by the red curling of his hair. The guests withdrew. Olive Ilden fiddled with a teaspoon and frowned.

"I rather expected you on Tuesday."

"Had to stay in London. Mr. Carlson wanted me to look at a couple of plays he's thinkin' of bringing over."

"Really, I don't see why you Yankees always import our nonsense. One hears of the Pinero rubbish playing for thousands of nights in the States. Why?"

"The women like it," he wildly said, quoting Carlson. "Are those your kids?"

"Mine and my husband's," Olive laughed and called Joan and Robert Ilden from their game with the kitten. Mark played with them in all content for half an hour, didn't glance at Olive, and told her blond children about his best nephew, Gurdy Bernamer. The bored infants broke his watch chain and their puzzled mother took Mark to walk. She led him down through the college and wondered why he paused to stare at the cathedral walls where the sunshine was pallid on the weathered stone.—He was thinking that bulbs tinted straw colour might get this glow against properly painted canvas—His eyes opened and his drowsy gaze pleased the woman. She said, "Do you like it? The cathedral?"

"The tower's too small," he said.

"Clever of you. Yes, architects think so. Glad you noticed."

"Anybody could see that. Is that the Bishop?"

he asked, seeing black gaiters in motion on a lawn.

"A mere dean. And the birds are rooks. All the best cathedrals have rooks about. Shall we go in?"

"I'd just as soon," he nodded, regretting that the queer shade of the elms wasn't possible on a backdrop.

The interior charmed him. He forgot his headache. His thoughts hopped. Church scenes never went well. No way to capture this slow echo for the stage. The upper brightness made him raise his eyes. This range of high windows where the lights melted together was called a "clerestory." The mingled glory almost frightened him. He saw a white butterfly that jigged and wheeled, irreverent, solitary on the far shadows of the vault. Mark smiled. Small Gurdy Bernamer named butterflies "bruffles" and was probably chasing one, now, across the hot perfume of the Fayettesville garden. The fancy made him homesick. He blinked. The woman watching him saw crystal wetness point his lashes and hastily stated, "This is William de Wykeham's tomb."

Mark examined the painted tomb, wished he could sketch the canopy and the pygmy monks who pray at the Bishop's feet. Gurdy Bernamer would like the monks and would break them. He rubbed his nose and chuckled.

"I suppose," Olive said, "that all this seems rather silly to you. You're a practical people."

"It's good lookin'. I don't see how a good lookin' thing can be silly, exactly. I was thinkin' my kid nephew'd like those monks to play with. But he'd bust them.—Isn't King William Rufus buried here?"

"You've been reading a guide book!"

"Oh, no. That's in history. They lugged him here on a wagon or something and buried him. Where's he plant—buried?"

Mark wished that the dark lady would stop frowning as she steered him to the glum, polished tomb in the choir. He must be offensive to her. She said, "This is supposed to be the tomb. They're not sure," and Mark stared at the raised slab of ugly stone with awe. The organ began to growl softly in a transept. It was solemn to stand, reflecting on the Red King while the organ moaned a marching air. William Rufus had been dead so long. History was amazing. . . . When he had a theatre of his own Mark meant to open it with Richard III or with Henry V. Carlson told him that no one would ever play Richard III again as Booth had gone too high in the part. But the Walling Theatre would be opened with a romantic play full of radiant clothes and scenes that would match the playhouse itself. The Walling would have a ceiling of dull

blue and boxes curtained in silk, black as a woman's hair. The lamps should wane in the new manner when the acts began and there would be mirrors rimmed in faint silver to gleam in far nooks of the balcony—something to shimmer in corners and shadows of his dream. . . . Mark stared down the nave and built his theatre against the grey age of this place until Olive sat in a heap of muslin on the tomb of William Rufus.

"One doesn't have to bother about such an indifferent king. There are some more in those tins—I mean caskets—on top of the choir screen. Edmund and so on."

"More kings? But won't a—a sacristan or something come an' chase you off of here?"

"What do you know about sacristans?"

"Cathedrals always have sacristans in books."

"I dare say you read quantities of bad novels," she observed.

"Well, I like Monsieur Beaucaire and Kim better'n anything I've read lately," said her bewildering pupil, "Say, who was Pico della Mirandola?"

"I don't think I can talk about the Renascence in Winchester choir," Olive choked and took him away.

Save for the studied clarity of voice he showed no theatrical traits. He resented the sign of The Plume of Feathers beside the West Gate because

"it spoiled the wall." He asked if the Butter Cross was a well and bought several postcards at a shop where the squared panes arrested him. Olive made conjectures. She was twenty-six. She had known actors in some bulk. This wasn't an actor, observably. She guided him back toward the college and through a swarm of lads in flannels. At these Mark looked and sighed.

"Why that sob?"

"Dunno. I s'pose because kids are havin' such an awful good time and don't know it. I mean —they'll get married and all that."

"Are you married?"

Mark said cheerfully, "Divorced."

"Tell me about it."

"D—don't think I'd better, Mrs. Ilden."

"Is that American?"

"Is—is what?"

"That delicate respect for my sensibilities."

"Don't know what you mean exactly. I had to divorce Cor—my wife and I'd rather not talk about it."

Olive felt alarmed. She said, "I'm supposed to tutor you in art and ethics and I'm merely trying to get your point of view, you know? Don't look so shocked."

"I don't see what my gettin' divorced has to do with art and ethics. . . . Oh, was this man Leighton a better painter'n Whistler?"

His questions ranged from the salary of canons to professional cricket. He wore a small and single pearl in his shirt at dinner, sat eating chastely and stared at Olive between the candles that made his grey eyes black in the brown of his face. The parlour-maid brought him the silver bowl of chutney three unnecessary times. He timidly corrected Olive's views on farm labour in the United States with, "I'm afraid you're wrong. I was brought up on a farm."

"Really? I was wondering."

"Fayettesville. It's up in the woods behind Trenton. Say, what's the Primrose League?"

For a week Olive tried to outline this mentality. He plunged from subject to subject. Economics wearied him. "What's it matter what kind of a gover'ment you have so long as folks get enough to eat and the kids ain't—don't have to work?" Religion, he said, was all poppycock. His "papa" admired Robert Ingersoll and "What's it matter whether folks have souls or not?"

"You're a materialist," she laughed.

"Well, what of it?"

"I'm trying to find out what your ethical standards are. Why don't you cheat at poker?"

"Because it ain't fair. It's like stealin' a man's wife."

"Some one stole your wife, didn't he?"

Mark finally chuckled. "You'd hardly call it

stealing. She just walked off when she knew I'd —heard about it."

He blushed, hoping he hadn't transgressed and hurriedly asked whether Bernard Shaw was really a vegetarian. He had no opinion of Shaw's plays but thought "The Devil's Disciple" a better play than "Magda." "The Sunken Bell" was "pretty near up to Shakespeare." He was worried because "Treasure Island" couldn't be dramatized and recited "Thanatopsis" to the horror of Olive's children. Olive interrupted the recital.

"That'll be quite enough, thanks! Wherever did you pick up that sentimental rot?"

"Just what is bein' sentimental?" Mark demanded.

"Writing such stuff and liking it when it's written! I suspect you of Tennyson."

"Never read any. Tried to. Couldn't, except that Ulysses thing. Let's go take a walk."

"Too warm, thanks," said Olive, wanting to see whether this would hold him in his basket chair under the limes.

"I'll be back about tea time," Mark promised, paused on his way up the garden to kiss Bobby Ilden's fair head as the little boy reminded him of Gurdy Bernamer and vanished whistling "The Banks of the Wabash."

"All his clothes are black," said young Joan Ilden, "but I was helping Edith dust in his room

this morning and he has the nicest blue pyjamas."

"Do go pull Bobby out of the raspberries," Olive said and fell into a sulk which she didn't define. She lounged in her chair watching the light play on the straight bole of a tree behind the emptied place where Mark had been sitting. . . . Rage succeeded the sulk. This was a stupid augmentation of her income. Olive disapproved landholding but it would be easier every way when Ilden's uncle died and he came into the Suffolk property. Then she would be able to live in London instead of flitting there for a breath of diversion. She hoped Mark would go to London soon. . . . He had the mind of a badly schooled stock-broker! Olive lifted her portfolio from the table and penciled a note to her husband. "I do wish you could slaughter your dear uncle, Jack. Ian Gail has sent me a silly Yankee to educate. I hope I have no insular prejudice against the harmless, necessary Colonial but this cad—" Then she thought. "What am I saying here? I don't mean it. I'm lying," and tore up the paper.

Mark went swimming in the Itchen and did not come home until seven. He dressed in six minutes and found Olive clad in black lace by the drawing room mantel of white stone. He said, "Say, I ran into a flock of sheep an' an old feller with a crook. Do they still do that?"

"Do?"

"Crooks. And he had on a blue—what d'you call it?—smock?"

Olive laughed and lifted her arms behind her head.

"Did you think some one was staging a pastoral for your benefit? But you didn't come home to tea and there were some quite amusing people here. I kept them as long as I could."

"Too bad," said Mark, "I'm sorry."

"You shouldn't lie so. You're not at all sorry. You're bored when people come and you have to play the British gentleman. And there are so many other things better worth doing."

"That's in Shaw," Mark guessed, "Clyde Fitch was talkin' about it. But what's wrong with actin' like a gentleman?"

"What's the use? Your manners are quite all right. If you'd talk to people and collect ideas. . . . It's so much more important to straighten out your ideas than to stand and hold a teacup properly. A butler can do that. I could train a navvy to do that. And—"

"That's an awful good looking dress," he broke in, "Nicest you've had on since I've been here."

Olive let an arm trail on the mantel where the stone cooled it. "I'm talking about your intellect and you talk about my frock."

"I know something about dresses and I don't

know a thing about intellect. You ought to wear dark things because you've got such a nice sk— complexion."

"I don't bother about clothes except when Jack's at home and I want to keep his attention. . . . You were in Cuba, you said? Did you kill any one?"

"Don't know. Tried to. Why?"

"I was wondering whether you'd mind killing an old duffer in Suffolk. He keeps my husband out of twelve hundred a year and a decentish house. Would you mind?"

Mark saw this was meant as a joke and laughed, studying her arm which gleamed white on the white stone.

"My husband's uncle. He's easily eighty and he's very Tory."

"Haven't got any uncles. Got an aunt that's pretty awful. She's a Methodist."

He wouldn't look at her. He still stared at the arm sprawled on the mantel and smiled like a child. Olive wanted to hurt him suddenly, to rouse him. The glowing stare was too childish. She drawled, "I went into your bedroom to see that they'd swept it decently. Are those the family portraits on the desk? Who's the fat girl with the baby?"

"Sadie. My sister. She's puttin' on weight. Papa keeps two hired girls now and she don't

have to cook. The yellow-headed fellow's her husband—Eddie Bernamer. Awful fine man."

He beamed at Olive now, doting on Eddie Bernamer's perfections. Olive tried, "And the lad with the very huge pearl in his scarf is your brother? And they all live on your father's farm? And you go down there and bore yourself to death over weekends?"

"Don't bore myself at all. I get all the New York I want weekdays. Fine to get out and ride a horse round. Nice house. We built a wing on when Joe got married last year."

The parlour-maid announced dinner. Mark gave Olive his arm and wanted to stroke her arm white across the black of his sleeve. He talked of his family through the meal and after it, leaning on the piano while Olive played. He tortured her with anecdotes of his and Joe's infancy and with the deeds of Gurdy Bernamer. He sighed, reporting that Sadie's oldest girl had died.

"You mean you're wearing mourning for a six year old child!"

"Of course," said Mark.

"And then you ask me what a sentimentalist is!" Olive struck a discord into the Good Friday Spell and sneered, "I dare say you think life's so full of unpleasantness that it shouldn't be brought into the theatre!"

"No. I don't think that, exactly. But I don't

think there's any sense in doin' a play where you can't—can't—well, make it good lookin'. These plays where there's nothin' but a perfec'ly ordinary family havin' a fight and all that—A show ought to be something more.—You get the music in an opera. Carmen'd be a fine hunk of bosh if you didn't have the music and the Spanish clothes. Just a dirty yarn! . . . There'd ought to be somethin' good lookin' in a play. . . . Nobody believes a play but girls out of High School. . . . If you can't have poetry like Shakespeare you ought to have something—something pretty—I don't mean pretty—I mean—" Olive stopped the music. Mark descended rapidly and went on, "I don't care about these two cent comedies, either."

"You don't like comedy?"

"Not much. Truth is, I don't catch a joke easy. I've tried readin' Molière but it sounds pretty dry to me. Haven't tried—Aristophanes?—I guess that's deeper'n I could swim—"

"Rot! You mustn't let yourself—what is it?—be blinded by the glory of great names. Any one who can see the point in Patience can understand Aristophanes. . . . But you haven't much humour. But you've played in comedy?"

"Some. I'd just as soon."

Olive began "Anitra's Dance" knowing that he liked melodrama and watched his eyes brighten,

dilating. She said amiably, "A fine comedian's the greatest boon in the world. Women especially. Is it true that women who're good in comedy are usually rather serious off the stage?"

"Can't say—Well, my wife was pretty damn serious!"

His huge sigh made Olive laugh. She asked, "You've no children?"

"No. Guess that was the trouble.—Play that Peer Gynt Mornin' thing."

"I've played enough," said Olive. "You say Mr. Carlson sent you over to look at some plays for him? He must trust your judgment."

Mark answered happily, "Sure. He says that if I take to a play so'll every one else. He says I've got lots of judgment about plays."

Olive shut the piano and rose. Her face wrinkled off into laughter. She said, "You dear thing! I dare say he's quite right about that. Good night."

She strolled out of the drawing room and Mark could see her passing up the long stairs. She moved splendidly against the white panels. One wrist caressed the rail. The black gown dragged gently up the rosy treads. She vanished slowly into the dark and Mark said, "Golly," as he went to get his hat. He wandered over to the bar of the Black Swan and drank cold ale while he meditated.

He mustn't fall in love. Eddie Bernamer and Joe disapproved of affairs with married women. They were right, of course. And nothing must interfere with his tutelage. And Ilden was at sea. But this was vexatious! He wished she did not stroll so lazily up stairs, across gardens. He wished that her hair wasn't black.—He found himself blushing at breakfast when she came in with a yellow garden hat on the black of her hair. Now that he'd begun to think of it she looked rather like Cora Boyle.

He thought of Cora Boyle again in the garden after luncheon. The children had left a green rubber ball on the turf. Mark rolled it about with one sole and watched Olive trim a patch of dull blue flowers. His place and the ball underfoot recalled something cloudy. He worked to evolve a real memory and laughed. Olive quickly glanced up.

"You keep asking about my wife. She was boardin' with us at the farm. First time she ever spoke to me I was kicking a ball around, in the garden. This way. I was barefoot. Cora said, 'Ain't you too old to go barefooted?' I forget what I said."

"But with the ball that day you played no more?"

"That sounds like a piece of a play," said Mark.

"It's from a comedy," Olive snapped, "Do get

your hat and take a walk. I'll be busy for an hour. Look at the Deanery garden. The Dean's gone to Scotland."

"Got to write a letter first. Boat from Liverpool tomorrow."

He mailed a letter to Joe's wife, born Margaret Healy, tramped down to the Close and examined the Dean's garden. It would make a neat setting, the mass of the Cathedral to the left, the foliate house to the right. A maid in black and white passed over the grass and reminded him of Joe's wife again by a certain dragging gait. He went into the cathedral and studied the Wykeham tomb from all angles. Some tourists hummed in the nave; a guide in a frock coat ambled after them descanting thinly of dead kings. Mark fell into a genial peace, leaned on a column, smiling at the far roof. The feet of the tourists made a small melody among the tombs and this seemed to increase. He heard a rapid breath and saw Olive with his coat over her arm. She panted, "I've packed your things. They're in the cab. At the gates. Hurry. You've hardly time to get to the station. Do hurry! I'll telegraph to Liverpool and ask them to hold a cabin—stateroom—whatever they call them.—Oh, do hurry!"

"What's happened?"

"Oh, this!—I didn't look at the cover—thought it was from Jack—"

Mark snatched the telegram and read, "Joe and Margaret killed wreck Trenton come if—" then rolled the paper into his palm. Olive saw his eyes swell and gasped, "Who's Margaret?"

"Joe's wife. Where's cab?"

"At the gates. Run."

He dashed into the sun beyond the open doors then the red hair gleamed as he came wheeling back to gulp, "Send you a check from—"

Olive spread her hands out crying, "No! I shan't take it!" and saw him rush off again. The cab made no noise that she could hear. She shivered as if a warming fire died suddenly in winter and left her cold. Presently she struck a palm on the stone beside her and said, "Sentimentalist! Sentimentalist!" while she wept. She made use of Mark, though, in her next novel, The Barbarian, which began her success. Mark was rather flattered by the picture and glad that he hadn't insulted this clever, wise woman by making love to her. He thought of Olive as exalted from the ranks of passionate, clutching females and often wrote long, artless letters to her.

III

Full Bloom

THE family council prudently allowed Mark to adopt his brother's orphan, Margaret. He sometimes borrowed Gurdy Bernamer to keep the dark child company in his New York flat. By 1905 the borrowing settled into a habit. Gurdy provided activity for a French nurse and then for an English governess despatched by Olive Ilden. He was a silent, restless creature. He disliked motor cars for his own unrevealed reason that they resembled the hearses of his uncle's funeral. He had a prejudice against small Margaret because she looked like her dead mother, an objectionable person smelling of orange water, and because Mark made a fuss over the child. He learned to read newspapers, copying Mark's breakfast occupation, and in September, 1907, noted that Carlson and Walling would tonight inaugurate their partnership by the presentation of "Red Winter" at their new 45th Street Theatre. "Inaugurate" charmed Gurdy. It conveyed an image of Mark and the bony Mr. Carlson doing something with a mon-

strous auger. Mark had for ever stopped acting in May, would henceforth "manage." Curiosity pulled Gurdy from the window seat of his playroom in Mark's new house on 55th Street. He waited for a moment when the governess, Miss Converse, was scolding young Margaret and wouldn't see him slide down the hall stairs. He scuttled west, then south and navigated Broadway until he reached the mad corner of 45th Street where a gentleman took him by the collar of his blouse and halted him.

"Where are you going?"

Gurdy recognized a quiet character who came to luncheons now and then. He said, "H'lo, Mr. Frohman," dutifully and looked about for the theatre. The stooping man detained him gravely.

"I thought you weren't old enough for shows."

"I'm looking for Mark."

Mr. Frohman chuckled, leaning on a stick. He said, "He's in his office."

"Where's that?"

Gurdy stared past the pointing stick and saw a cream face of columns and windows. He saw the stone above a ring of heads. People were gaping at his calm acquaintance as if this plump, tired man was a kicking horse. He remembered civility and asked, "How's your rheumatism?"

"Better," said Mr. Frohman and limped away.

Gurdy pushed scornfully through the gapers

and trotted into the white vestibule of the theatre where men were arranging flowers—horseshoes of orchids, ugly and damp, roses in all tints, lumps of unknown bloom on standards wrapped in silver foil. A redhaired, hatless youth listed the cards dangling from these treasures and told Gurdy to go to hell when Gurdy asked for his uncle but another man nodded to stairs of yellow, slick marble. On the landing Gurdy found a door stencilled in gold, "Carlson & Walling." The door opened into a room hung with photographs where Gurdy saw Mark sitting on a table, surrounded by men. Mr. Carlson, already sheathed in winter furs, bullied a carpenter who corrected the lower shelf of a bookcase. Gurdy stood wondering at the furious shades of neckties and the grey hard hats which Miss Converse thought vulgar.

"My God," said Carlson, "Mark, look at that comin' in!"

Mark groaned. He had a compact with Mrs. Bernamer that the borrowed boy shouldn't enter a theatre until he was twelve. He was tall enough for twelve but he was only nine. He stayed in the doorway, studying the red walls of the room, his white socks far apart and his hands thrust into the pockets of his short, loose breeches. The callers stared at the tough legs brown from summer on the farm. The boy's

one patent beauty, his soft, pale hair, was hidden by his English sailor cap and his white blouse was spotted with ink stains. But the men grinned and chuckled, admiringly. Gurdy made no sound when Carlson set him on the top of the bookcase but gazed contemptuously at the crowding men and let himself be petted.

"When d'you inaugurate, Mark?"

"Eight fifteen, when you'll be in bed, sonny."

Gurdy drawled, "I don't get to bed till quarter of nine and you ought to know that by this time." He frowned, partly closing his dark blue eyes, as the men laughed. "What are all those flowers for?"

A man in a corner lifted his white face from a book and whispered, "Those are gifts the Greeks brought." This caused stillness, then unpleasing chuckles. Gurdy climbed down from the bookcase and went to talk to Mr. Fitch. They talked of French lessons and the vagaries of governesses. The other callers complimented Mark on the boy's good looks. The flattery was soothing after the strain of the last rehearsal. Mark knew it for flattery. Gurdy's face was too long, his sober mouth too wide and his jaw prematurely square. But the compliments were the due of a successful actor turned manager. He sat for a little watching Mr. Fitch lazily chat with the boy as though he were a grown man.

On the playwright's warning he had lately published a careful interview announcing Gurdy and Margot as adopted children and his relationship to them. But people still probably reported Gurdy an illegitimate son and Margot his daughter by Cora Boyle. Mark sighed and took Gurdy down through the flowers to see the cream and gold play house where men were squirting perfume from syringes along the red aisles, killing the smell of paint. He let Gurdy have a syringe and went into the vestibule. The red-haired clerk listing the gifts of other managers handed him the card wet from its journey in a ball of pink roses.

"Mrs. Cosmo Rand. . . Who the devil's Mrs. Cosmo Rand, Billy?"

The clerk scratched his ear and grinned. "You'd ought to know, sir."

"But I don't. Cosmo Rand? Heard of him. Loeffler's got him in something. Who's she?"

"Miss Cora Boyle," said the clerk and strolled off to insult a messenger bringing in more flowers.

Mark had a curious, disheartening shock. He didn't bow to Cora Boyle on the street. What right had she to send him flowers? It must be a passing rudeness. She might remember that he disliked pink roses. Mark rested on the ledge of the box office, brooding. But she might mean to be pleasant. Her manager, Loeffler, was on bad

terms with Carlson. This might be a dictated, indirect peace offering. Mark patted the florid carved stone of the ledge and thought. Cora's new play wasn't a success. The reviews had been tart. She might be tired of Loeffler. Mark was perplexed but the hunt for motives always wearied him. A scarlet petticoat went by outside the vestibule and led off his mind. He bade his treasurer telephone for the motor and stood joking with the man through the box office window until a flat stop in the noise behind him made Mark turn his head. The florists and clerks were motionless, regarding the street. A coupé had stopped. A footman was helping a woman and a tumult of varied flowers to the sidewalk. She came toward the doors gallantly, her face quite hidden in the enormous bouquet but the treasurer said, "By gee, I'd know her in hell, by her walk," and chuckled. She tripped on the sill and screamed gaily to Mark, "Au s' cours!"

Mark jumped to catch the sheaf of yellow roses. Miss Held waved her grey gloves wide and dipped her chin. "Je t' apporte une gerbe vu que t'es toujours bon enfant, Marc Antoine! And 'ow does Beatriz get along to teach you French?"

"Pretty fair. Haven't had much time lately. Thought you'd taken your show on the road, Anna?"

"Nex' week.'" Up the staircase some one

began to whistle "La Petite Tonkinoise." The little woman vibrated inside the grey case of her lacy gown and pursed her lips. "Oh, but I am sick of that tune! Make him stop." The whistler heard and ceased. Miss Held swayed to and fro among the flowers, noting cards. She adopted a huge orchid for her waist and smiled down at it. A dozen grins woke in the collecting crowd. Mark was aware of upholsterers oozing from the theatre. Miss Held hummed from gift to gift, murmuring names—"Le Moyne. . . . ton institutrice. . . . Ce bon vieux David. . . . Nice lilies." She moved in a succession of swift steps that seemed balanced leaps. One of the florist's girls sighed a positive sob of envy. The curving body and the embellished eyes kept the crowd still. The soft gloves drooped on the hard lustre of the stirring arms. Mark wondered at her cool, sardonic mastery of attention. She was bored, unwell and her frock was nothing new. She was Anna Held and the people were edging in from the sidewalk to look at her.

"Like to see the house, Anna?"

"Oh, no. I very well know what that would be. All red, and gold fishes on the ceiling, eh? No. I must go away." She strolled off toward her carriage, chattering sudden French which Mark did not understand. He heard an immense discussion surge up in the vestibule as he shut the

coupé door, walked through it into the theatre where two upholsterers were quarrelling over the age of the paragon and where Mark bumped against a man in brown who seemed to inspect the gold dolphins of the vault.

"Clumsy," said the man, briskly.

"Didn't see you, sir."

"I meant the decoration." The man flicked a hand at the ceiling and the red boxes, "Like Augustin Daly's first house but much worse. We should have passed that. Gilt. It's the scortum ante mortum in architecture." He jammed a cigarette between the straight lips of his flushed face and went on in a rattle of dry syllables. "Some one should write a monograph on gold paint and the theatrical temperament. Plush and passion. Stigmata. . . . Sous un balcon doré. . . . Can you give me a match? . . . Where's Carlson's office?" He bustled out of the foyer.

Mark wearily tore Cora Boyle's card in his tanned fingers and nodded. The stranger was right. This new theatre was stale. The gold sparkled stupidly. The shades of velvet were afflicting. But Carlson liked it. Mark sighed and thought, rather sadly, that his patron's whole concept of the trade was vulgar and outworn like this gaudy expense. Red velvet, heavy gold, bright lamps—the trappings of his apprenticeship.

Old actors told Mark that this was a variant of the first Daly theatre. The stranger was right, then. Mark wondered and went upstairs to the office but the flushed man was gone.

"That feller Huneker was in tryin' to get me to hire some orchestra leader," Carlson said.

"But I thought Huneker was a young man," Mark answered.

Mr. Fitch whispered from his corner, "He hasn't any particular age. What was that riot downstairs, Mark?"

"Anna Held dropped in and left some flowers. She ain't lookin' well."

The playwright closed his magazine and lifted himself from the chair, assuming his strange furry hat. "We have just so much vitality. She's losing hers. But if she died tomorrow it would make almost as much noise as killing a president. And that's quite right. Presidents never make any one feel sinful. Good night."

Carlson asked, "You're comin' tonight, Clyde."

"Not feeling right, thanks."

Mark followed the bent back down the stairs. Fitch was stopped by a lounger at the doors, loaned the old fellow ten dollars and passed, unobtrusive, along Forty Fifth Street. He went shadowlike in his vivid dress. Liking the man, Mark frowned. The exhausted courtesy, the slow voice always left him puzzled; it was as

though the playwright's prosperity kept within it a dead core of something pained, as if the ghost of an old hunger somehow lived on under the coloured superfluity.

Mark's motor arrived outside. He went to whistle Gurdy up from an investigation of the orchestra pit. All the bulbs burned about the house. For a second Mark liked the place then the gilt and the mulberry hangings bothered him. He chased Gurdy up an aisle to the vestibule. The treasurer slipped from the box office to say, "Young Rand just called up. I said you wasn't here."

"Who?"

"Cora Boyle's new husband. That English kid."

Mark shrugged and shoved Gurdy into the dull blue limousine at the curb. The motor took him away from the theatre and away from several beckoning hands on the sidewalk. His shift to managership had changed the fashion of salutes. People now beckoned him with a posture of confidential affection and earnestness. They had friends to recommend, deep suggestions. Carlson had warned him, "Mind, you're a kid with a pocketful of candy, now. You've stopped bein' just one of the gang. Better ride in cabs if you want to get anyplace." Well, the motor, with its adorable slippery blue crust, kept people at a dis-

tance. Mark wound an arm about Gurdy and pulled himself into a corner of the seat. The car was hampered by a dilatory van that lurched ahead of its hood. The chauffeur cursed in Canadian French and a messenger boy on the van's tail cursed back, joyously foul, emptily shooting accusations of all sins in a sweet, sexless howl that pierced the glass about Mark and made him grin, absently amused.

"He's mad," said Gurdy, dispassionately.

"No. He's just talking, son."

"Huh," Gurdy grunted, trying to match the words with ordinary conversation. This messenger boy was plainly an accomplished fellow. The van rolled off over Broadway in a shock of light and dust. Gurdy saw "Red Winter" on a poster and asked, "Is this Red Winter a good play, Mark?"

"Pretty fair, honey."

"Well, can I come to it?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Too dirty," Mark said, then, "All about killin' folks, son."

Gurdy argued, "Well, Lohengrin's all about killing people and Miss Converse took me to that and it was in Dutch."

"German, sonny."

"I like French better'n German," Gurdy

yawned, waving a leg in the air and went on, "I think Broadway's ugly."

"You're right," said Mark, enchanted by such taste.

Yet Carlson really liked to stroll on Broadway and Cora Boyle had often led Mark for dusty hours through this complexity of hesitant, garrulous people, along these sidewalks where there was nothing to be seen. He rubbed his jaw and thought of Paris, viewed last summer, of the long, swooping street at Winchester gilt in an afterglow. Oh, after dark Broadway was tolerable! Then the revolving people were shapes of no consequence and, with a little mist, these lights were aqueous, flotillas of shimmering points on a hovering, uncertain vastness. Now, the roadway was a dappled smear of bodies wheeled and bodies shod. The sidewalks writhed, unseemly. But Cora Boyle liked it. The pretty, black haired dancer just then lodged at Mark's cost had rooms overlooking the new width above Forty Second Street. And she liked that. . . . And she liked the scenery of "Red Winter." Poor stuff, he thought. He cursed scene painters. Charles Frohman had heard of a fellow who'd studied the art in Berlin and made astonishing sets. He must telephone Frohman and get the man's name. He was tired. "Red Winter" had tired him. The leading woman had a way of

saying "California" through her nose that had vexed him all week. A poor play. His head was full of jagged swift ideas, of memories; Eddie Bernamer milking a young cow against a sulphur wall and laughing when Mark tried to sketch him on the fly leaf of an algebra; Cora Boyle swaggering into Rector's in a blue dress; Clyde Fitch telling little Margaret that her name was Margot; Stanford White shouting with laughter because Mark softened the ch of "architecture." Why hadn't they given White a billion dollars and let him build the whole city into charms of tranquil, columnar symmetry? . . . Gurdy knew that his uncle was oppressed. When Mark thought hard he stroked the scar on his jaw. Gurdy wanted to talk, now, and tossed a leg over Mark's black, rocky knee.

"What're you thinkin' about, Mark?"

"Just bosh. What's Margot been doing all day?"

"Havin' a bellyache."

That terrified Mark. He sweated suddenly and called through the tube bidding the driver hurry. Spinal meningitis, he read, began with nausea. But when he ran into the panelled library of his house Margot was playing with her largest doll and the angular governess assured him, in simple French, that a pill had set things right. Margot lifted her black eyes and said,

rubbing her stomach, "I was ill, papa," in her leisurely way.

"Ate breakfast too fast," Gurdy said, in grim displeasure, watching Mark double his lean height and begin to cuddle Margot.

Margot stared at her cousin with an aggrieved, brief pout and then wound herself into Mark's lap. The large doll was named Aunt Sadie for Mrs. Bernamer. Margot said, "Miss Converse fixed Aunt Sadie's drawers, papa," and her brown face rippled as she displayed three stitches. Then she righted the doll and gazed at Mark devotedly, solemnly, preening her starched skirt of pink linen. Pink went with her black hair and her tawny skin. Mark touched a roaming mesh of her hair and her face rippled once more. Her skin had this amber haze like the water of a pool in the pine forest behind the farm. In that pool he had bathed with her father through endless afternoons, idling on until other boys lagged off and the shadows were ink on the crumbled ocher clay of the margin where pink boneset grew. And now Joe was dead and his blackhaired wife was dead . . . an unskilled cook before marriage, half Irish, half Italian, a good, sleepy woman who ate with her knife and wore a chaplet blessed for her Roman mother by some Pope. Margot would never know them. He kissed her

hair. She was this warm bubble enclosed in his arms.

"Love me any, sister?"

" 'Course," said Margot.

Gurdy snorted and stalked away. Mark talked to the stiff governess and patted Margot. Miss Converse sewed and chatted about Conrad's novels, then getting fashionable. She assented, "Very interesting. Romantic, of course. I dare say the colour attracts you."

"Of course," said Mark, "and what if they are romantic?"

She had some vague objection. If she bored him, Mark was still grateful that she hadn't tried to marry him. She was necessary to the training of the children but her buff, bulky face wasn't alluring and her gowns hurt him by a prevalence of mole embroidery and rumpled lace. She was a gentlewoman, wonderfully learned and obliging about his pet airs on the piano. Mark talked and wished that he could escape, like Gurdy who went to practice handsprings in the white hall and slid downstairs at the note of the doorbell.

Gurdy slid along the handrail of black wood so admired by callers and jumped for the dining room which had doors of glass coated in blue silk. These doors opened into the drawing room which Gurdy despised for its furniture all black

and silver and its hangings of cloudy tapestry, impossibly noiseless when one bounced balls against them. Yet people called it a lovely room. And now, peering through a rift of the blue silk Gurdy saw the butler turn a visitor into this space and the visitor looked about with brown eyes, seeming to admire. Gurdy speculated and decided that the slight man was an actor come to talk to Mark about a part. His hair curled, his overcoat clung to his middle neatly, his white gaiters were unspotted, his pale moustache didn't overhang his little mouth. He was visibly an actor. Gurdy had examined many through this spyhole. And like many the fellow went to glance at a circular mirror above the cabinet with tiny doors which Miss Converse called "Siennese." As Mark's feet descended, the man straightened himself and began a smile. Gurdy listened to the jar of his high voice against Mark's fuller drawl.

"Mr. Rand?"

"Yes. Don't think we've ever met. Daresay you know who I am and all that?"

"Yes," said Mark.

Gurdy noted the long pause. He held that actors were a talkative lot. Mr. Rand worked with his moustache an indefinite time before he spoke again.

"My wife sent me along—I'm a sort of ambas-

sador, you know? . . . Matter of business, entirely."

Mark said, "I see," wondering how old the man was. The moustache had an appearance of soft youth. He smiled, wanting Cora's third husband to be at ease, and nodded to a chair.

"Oh, thanks no. Mrs. Rand wants to know if if you'd mind meeting her. At her hotel, for instance?"

"I don't mind at all," Mark lied, "Glad to. Any time."

"Then she may let you know? Thanks ever so. Good luck to your play tonight," said the young man and walked out gracefully.

Gurdy came through the glass doors and asked, "Who's he?" Mark lifted the pliant, hard body in the air. He fancied that Gurdy must feel something odd, here.

"How old would you say he was, darling?"

"Dunno. Who's Mrs. Rand?"

"An actress."

"Put me down," said Gurdy, "My pants are comin' off."

Mark breathed comfortably, helped the boy on his knee tighten the white trousers and passed into dotage. Eddie Bernamer and Joe Walling had begotten these bodies. The fact mattered nothing. Mark was a father. He had possession. When things went wrong he could come home to

gloat over Margot and Gurdy. He promised, "I shan't be busy now for a week. We'll ride in the Park and feed the squirrels, sonny."

"All right. Say, Mark, you're all thin.—There's the doorbell, again.—Oh, say, a lady telephoned s'noon. Her name was Miss Monroe and she wanted you to call her up."

"I like her nerve!"

Gurdy jumped at this loud snort of his uncle.

"Who's she?"

"She's an actress," Mark stammered, hoping the boy wouldn't go on, and Carlson came in, his yellow face splotched as though he'd been walking fast.

"That Rand squirt been here?" he yelled at Mark.

"Yes. Why?"

"I passed him. What's he want?"

"Me to meet her."

"You goin' to?"

"Guess I better, Mr. Carlson."

Carlson jabbed Gurdy's stomach with his cane and panted, "I can tell you what she wants and don't you listen to it, neither. She's had a fight with Billy Loeffler. He won't put this whelp she married in her comp'ny. I bet she quits Loeffler. Her show's no good, anyhow. Well, I won't take her on. She's a second rater. She's an onion. I won't have her for nothin'. Don't you

get sentymental about Cora Boyle any more, son!"

"You needn't worry," said Mark, patting Gurdy's ear.

Gurdy sat up and inquired, "Is that the Cora Boyle grandpapa says was a loose footed heifer?" So Carlson broke into screaming mirth. Mark flushed and mumbled, sent the boy away and scowled respectfully at his partner. Sometimes Carlson's crude amusement stung him.

"For God's sake don't talk of her in front of the kids, sir!"

"All right, son. Goin' to let Gurdy come to the show tonight?"

"Not much!"

The old man lounged into a chair and jeered at his fosterling. Mark's horror diverted him. He yapped, "Still think it's a dirty show, do you?"

"Yes. . . . Oh, dunno! If there was anything to the slop but that second act, I wouldn't care. Nothing but Sappho over again. Old as the hills."

"What's new in the show business, son?"

"The Merry Widow is," Mark laughed, "and you wouldn't buy it. Savage is bringing it in week after next. They were playing the music at Rector's last night.—Look here, the set for the last act's all wrong, still. Those green curtains—"

"You and your sets! God," said Carlson, "you'd ought to've been a scene painter!"

"I wish I could be, for about one week!" Mark let a grievance loose, slapping his leg. "These people make me sick! You tell them you want something new and they trot out some sketch of a room that every one's seen for twenty years. They never think of—"

"You ain't ever satisfied! You act like scenery made a show—"

Mark sighed, "Well, we're not giving the public its moneysworth with this piece. The scenery's—mediocre.—Come up and see Margot."

The old man poked Margot's doll with a shaking thumb and called her Maggie to see her scowl, like Mark. The little girl's solemn vanity delighted him. He was also delighted by Gurdy who became an embodied sneer when Mark fondled Margot. The boy watched Mark kiss this female nuisance then walked haughtily out of the library and set to work banging the piano in the upper playroom.

"All you need's a wife and a mother-in-law and you'd have a happy home," Carlson said when Mark let him out of the front door.

"Think I haven't?"

"I suppose you have. Ain't any truth in this that you're goin' to marry that Monroe gal?"

"No. I gave her a ring, last week. I suppose she's been airing it."

"Sure.—You big calf," the old man said with gloom, "you always act so kind of surprised when one of 'em brags of you. You ain't but twenty-nine and you're a fine lookin' jackass. Of course, she'll show off her solytaire! A gal's as vain as a man, any day. One of 'em'll get you married, yet.—Yell at that cab, son. My legs are mighty tired.—See you at eight sharp. Now, mind, I won't have nothin' to say to Cora Boyle."

Mark waited until the opening night of "The Merry Widow" for more news of Cora Boyle. She deserted her manager, Loeffler, while "Red Winter" was in the first week of its run at the 45th Street Theatre. Mark saw her lunching in the Knickerbocker grill with her young husband and a critic who always touted her as the successor of Ada Rehan. A busybody assured Mark that Cosmo Rand was twenty. Cora was thirty one. All three of her husbands, then, were younger. The oddity of theatrical marriage still alarmed Mark. In Fayettesville it was a fixed convention that girls should be younger than their husbands. But she was luscious to see at the "Merry Widow" opening. Mark thought how well she looked, hung above the crowd in the green lined box. She found novel fashions of massing her hair.

That night it rose in a black peak sustained by silver combs. She kept a yellow cloak slung across one bare shoulder concealing her gown. Against the gentle green of her background appeared three men. Rand wore a single eye-glass that sparkled duly when the outer lights were low. Through the music and the applause Mark was conscious of the box and of Cora's red feathered fan. Her second husband, a thin Jewish comedian, went up to shake hands in an entr' acte. Women behind Mark giggled wildly. He wandered into the bronze lobby where men were already whistling the slow melody of "Velia." He was chaffed by an Irish actor manager born in Chicago whose accent was a triumph of maintained vowels.

"An' why don't you go shake hands with Cora, bhoy?"

"Shut up, Terry. Come have a drink?"

He steered his friend to a new bar. The Irishman was rather drunk but vastly genial. He maundered, "A fool Cora was to let go of you, bhoy. They're tellin' me you've made money in the stockmarket, too."

"A little," Mark admitted.

"I've had no luck that way. Well, a fool Cora was.—And how's it feel bein' a manager, lad?"

"Fine."

The Irishman looked at Mark sidelong over his

glass, then up at the gold stars of the ceiling. "Ho!—Yes, it's a fine feelin'.—Well, wait until you've put on a couple of frosts, bhoy! And have to go hat in your hand huntin' a backer. You lend money, easy.—You'll see all the barflies that've had their ten and their twenty off you time and again—You'll see 'em run when they see you comin'. Well, here tonight and hell tomorrow.—So Cora's quit Billy Loeffler, has she? The dhear man! May his children all be acrobats! T'was Gus Daly taught the scut every trick he knows. The Napoleon of Broadway! I mind Loeffler runnin' err'nds for Daly in eighty five.—Well, you wanted to be a manager and here you are and here's luck.—It's a fine game—the finest there is—and, mind you, I've been a practicin' bhurglar and a plumber. Drink up."

They drank and returned to the green theatre, resonant with the prelude of the next act. Mark was struggling in the half lit thresh of men strolling toward their seats when Cosmo Rand halted him.

"You'd not mind coming to supper in our rooms at the Knickbocker?"

Mark accepted. The scene of the Maxim revel was lost to him while he wondered what Cora wanted. He wou'dn't engage her. Carlson's prejudice was probably valid. The old man swore that she was worthless outside light comedy. Yet

she had good notices in all her parts. She was famous for clothes. She signed recommendations for silks and unguents. She had made a dressmaker popular among actresses. She had played in a failure in London whence came legends of a passionate Duke. The Duke's passion might be invented, like other legends. He mused. The flowing waltz music made him melancholy. What sort of woman was Cora, nowadays? Every one changed. He, himself, had changed. He was getting callous to ready amities, explosions of mean jealousy. He knew nothing of Cora, really. She might be a different person, better tempered, less frank. Women were incomprehensible, anyhow. He would never understand them, doubted that anyone did and sighed. He walked to Cora's hotel with a feeling of great dignity. She had mauled him badly, abused him, lied to him and now she was seeking peace. Then, rising in the lift, he knew that this dignity had a hollow heart; he was afraid of Cora Boyle.

"This is awfully good of you," she said, shaking hands. Then she rested one arm on the shelf filled with flowers and smiled slowly, theatrically, kicking her rosy train into the right swath about her feet. Mark felt the display as a boast of her body. She resumed, "There's really no sense in our looking at each other over a fence, is there?"

His face, seen in a mirror among the flowers, cheered Mark to a grin. He looked impassive and bland. He drawled, "No sense at all," and stepped back. But she confused him. He had to speak. He said, "That's a stunning frock."

"You always did notice clothes, didn't you? Cosmo, do give Mr. Walling a drink."

Her voice had rounded and came crisply with an English hint. But it was not music. It jangled badly against Rand's level, "What'll you have, sir?" from the table where there were bottles and plates of sandwiches. Mark considered this boy as they talked of "The Merry Widow." He saw man's beauty inexpertly enough. Young Rand was handsome in the fragile, groomed manner of an English illustration. His chin was pointed. His eyes seemed brown. His curls lay in even bands. He had neither length nor strength. But he talked sensibly, rather shrewdly.

"There'll be a deal of money lost bringing over Viennese pieces, of course. This thing's one in a thousand. Quite charming."

Mark asked, "You've not been over here long?"

"I?" Rand laughed, "Lord, yes. I'm a Canadian. Born in Iowa, as a matter of fact. I've been a good deal in England, of course.— Oh, I was at your new piece the other night. Red Winter, I mean. How very nicely you've

mounted it. I really felt beastly cold in that second act. The snow's so good."

Mark bowed, selecting a sandwich. The critics had praised the snow scene. Rand might truly admire it. If the snow hadn't satisfied Mark it had pleased every one else. He lost himself in thoughts of snow. Cora trailed her rose gown to the table and poured water into a glass of pale wine. A broad bracelet on her wrist clicked against the glass. She said, "You and Carlson own all the rights to Red Winter, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to send it to London?"

He laughed and put down his glass. "London? What for? It'd last just about one week!"

Cora smiled over a shoulder, retiring to the shelf of flowers.

"It would do better than that, Mark. I've played in London."

"I've never played there but I've been there enough to know better. California Gold Rush! They don't know there was such a thing!"

"Oh, I say," said Rand.

Cora sipped some watered wine. The light shot through the glass and made a pear of glow on her thoat. She was motionless, drinking. She became a shape set separate from the world in a momentary gleam. He knew that she was acting. Then she said sharply, "I'll buy the English rights

if you and Carlson'll make me a decent figure."

"Oh, look here! You'd lose. I was talking to Ian Gail about it, last night. It wouldn't make a cent in England. They wouldn't know what it's all about. And—it's such a rotten play! There's nothing in it!"

She asked, looking at him, "Can I have it?" and her flat voice took fire in the question, achieved music. She must want the poor play badly. Rand's pink nails were lined along his moustache, hiding its silk. The room fell silent.

"Oh, sure," Mark said, "You can have it, Cora. I'll see Mr. Carlson in the morning. . . . But damned if I can make out what there is in the play."

"It's not the sort of thing you like, I know. But I'm sick of comedy and that's all I'm ever offered, here. And I'm sick of New York. Well, make me an offer of the English rights—Only—I'm no bank, Mark." She swaggered to the piano and tamely played a few bars of the Merry Widow waltz. She hadn't Olive Ilden's grace, so seated, and the rose gown seemed sallow against the black of the piano. She had finished her scene. Mark saw the familiar stir of her throat as she hid a yawn. He promised to hurry the business of the English rights to the melodrama and took his leave.

What had he feared? He tried to think, in

the corridor. Recapture, perhaps, by this woman who wasn't, after all, half as wicked as others. Her new elegance hadn't moved him. The stage did refine people! Cora had the full air of celebrity. She was now controlled, vainer. She might still be a shrew. He saddened, ringing for the lift, and thought of Cosmo Rand's future if "Red Winter" failed in London. The elevator deposited a page with a silver bucket and this went clinking to Cora's door. Rand and she would drink champagne. Mark sank pondering to the lounge and stopped to buy a cigar, there. It was almost one o'clock. Many of the lights had been turned out. The threaded marble lost sheen in the smoky gloom. Parties ebbed from the supper room and a wedge of dressed men waved to Mark. A candy merchant in the lead bawled to him and Mark went to be introduced to an English actress on the millionaire's arm. She swayed, gracious and tipsy, involved in a cloak of jet velvet, her voice murmurous as brushed harp strings emerging from the pallor of her face above the browning gardenias on the cloak. She asked, "Like this wrap? Makes me feel like a very big black cigar—I should have a very broad red and gold band." The men pressed about her fame sniggered, respecting this lovely myth. She was assigned in legend to the desire of princes. The candy merchant grinned, cuddling her hand on

his waistcoat. She tapped the brass edge of the turning door with a gardenia stem and smiled at Mark's silk hat, then at the millionaire. "Am I talking too loud, cherished one?"

"Shout your head off," the candy merchant said, "It's a free country."

"Oh, only the bond are free," she proclaimed. She told Mark, "Bond Street's getting frightfully shabby. Max Beerbohm says—I do look rather like a very big black cigar, don't I?—Do stop pulling my arm, you dear, fat thing!"

"The car's here, honey."

"How dear of the car! We're going to sup somewhere, aren't we? Oh, no, to bed.—Like a very big, black cigar—"

She was drawn through the brazen doors away from Mark. The men pushed after her avidly. She went tottering to the great motor, was engulfed. Mark blinked in the waning smell of gardenias, waited for the motor to be gone and walked into the street. He saw rain falling. There was no taxicab in sight along the street. From the west an orange palpitation flooded this darker way. Steam from a clamorous drill blew north about the white tower of the Times building. Wet cabs jerked north and south along the gleam of rails. The higher lights were gone. The rain dropped from an upper purple and rapped the crown of his hat as Mark strolled to

the corner. Some one began to talk to him before he reached Broadway. Mark glanced at this beggar carelessly and paused to dig in a pocket for change. The shivering voice continued.

". . . ain't like I'd come bothering you before. I ain't that kind. But you've got comp'nies on the road and honest, Walling, I'm as good as ever I was. You've mebbe heard that I'm taking dope. Not so. Some of that bunch at Bill Loeffler's office have been puttin' that out. Honest—"

Three white capped young sailors blundered past, all laughing, and jarred the shadowy body away from Mark. The man came shuffling back and clung to Mark's sleeve, his face lavender in the rainy light above a shapeless overcoat. He whispered on, "Honest, some of the things that bunch at Loeffler's place say about you and Carlson! But I ain't takin' nothing, Walling. Had a run of bad luck. I'm on the rocks. But you've seen me run a show. You know I can handle a comp'ny—"

"The light's so bad," said Mark, "and your collar—I'm not just sure who—"

The man gave a whimpering laugh. "Oh, I thought you was actin' kind of chilly to an old pal. I'm Jim Rothenstein. You know? I was stage manager for Carlson back when you was playin' the kid in Nicoline. You know. I gave you your job. Cora Boyle she brought you in

to me and asked if there wasn't a little part—Honest, I ain't takin' dope. That bunch—"

Mark gulped, "Of course you're not." Some harsh drug escaped from the man's rags. This was nightmare. Mark found a bill and held it out, backing from the shadow. "Come round to my office some day and I'll see what—"

A hansom rolled to the curb and the driver raised his whip. Mark ran to shelter, crying his address. The grey horse moved toward Broadway. Mark shoved up the trap and shouted to the driver, "No! Go up Fifth Avenue!"

IV

Penalties

CORA BOYLE played "Red Winter" in London for two years. She began her run in May of 1908 with a popular English male star as her hero. He presently retired from the company and Cosmo Rand replaced him. Olive Ilden wrote an opinion to Mark from her new house in Chelsea: "It seems to me that your one time wife is a competent second rate actress. She—or someone near her—must have intelligence. She has perfectly applied our musical comedy manner to melodrama. She is languid and rude to the audience and is enormously, successful, naturally. Ambrose Russell is painting her. If you knew London you would understand that to have Ambrose Russell paint one implies entire success. He alternates Gaiety girls and Duchesses and has acquired a trick of wonderful vulgarity. I met Miss Boyle at his studio on Sunday. We talked about you and she rather gushed. Her infantile husband stood by and said Rawther at intervals like an automatic figure on a clock. A pretty thing. . . . Of course I prefer London to Winchester. Ecclesi-

astical society is only amusing in Trollope. My husband got our house from a retired Admiral and it has a garden. I have fallen in love with him—my husband, not the Admiral. He has written a book of Naval tales on the sly and to my horror they are quite good. Having scorned him as a mere gentleman all these years it upsets me to have to consider him as an artist. I hear from Ian Gail that your plays all make quantities of money because they are utter rubbish in lovely settings and that your house is an upholsterer's paradise. Very bad for the children who are probably spoiled beyond hope or help."

Mark wrote four pages of denial and received: "Nonsense! Of course you do not have courtesans to lunch but leading ladies come and swoon on your drawing room floor and the children are pointed out in your Central Park as Mark Walling's brats. Your parasites fawn on them. Their world is made up of expensive motors, sweets and an adoring idiot as God. The little boy reads theatrical reviews over his porridge and the litle girl probably does not know that she is a mammal and liable to death, spanking or lessons. They live in a treacle well. . . . Your one time wife has taken a house near me and her pictures, eating breakfast in bed with a Pom on the pillow, adorn the Sketch. I danced with her husband last night."

Cora Boyle's photographs in the London Weeklies made old Carlson sneer. He lounged in Mark's library and derided: "A fine figger and a pair of black eyes. Actress? Sure. She makes pictures of herself. And what the hell else do folks want, huh? Just that. They want pictures. You say they want fine scenery and new ideas about lights and all? Bosh, son! They want to see a good lookin' gal in good clothes—and not much clothes—with all the lights in the house jammed on her. Act? Make 'em cry a little and they think it's actin'. Margot'll be the boss actress of the United States when she's twenty—Come here, Maggie, and tell me how old you are."

"Seven and a half," said Margot, "and I don't want to be an actress."

"Huh. Why not?"

"Aunt Sadie says actresses aren't nice," Margot informed him.

Carlson wrinkled his yellow face and chuckled out, "Ask Mark what he thinks of 'em, sister."

She turned her eyes up to Mark gravely and smiled. She was unlike her father, most like her mother. Mark bent and lifted her in the air, kissed her bare knees and put her hair aside from the little ears, faintly red, delightfully chilled for his mouth from a walk in the Park. She

said, on his shoulder, "Oo, that's a new stickpin, papa!"

"Diamonds get 'em all," Carlson nodded.

"It's a sapphire," said Mark.

"Nice," Margot approved and Mark felt glorified. Children were certainly a relief after the arid nonchalance of women who took money, jewels or good rôles and asked for more donations over the house telephone. Margot played with the sapphire square a moment and then scrambled down from Mark's shoulder to his knee where she sat admiring him while he wrote checks. He smiled at her now and then, let her blot signatures and kissed her hands when she did so.

"You'd spoil a trick elephant," Carlson muttered, "Ain't Gurdy old enough to go to school?"

"He started in at Doctor Cary's last week. They've got him learning Latin and French, right off."

"What's Doctor Cary's?"

"It's a school in Sixtieth Street."

"Hump," said Carlson, "Private School? Well, you're right. Public schools teach hogwash. They got to. They teach hogs. But why didn't you send him to one these schools out of town while you were at it? Get him out of New York."

"My G—glory," Mark cried, "He's only nine!"

Margot corrected, "Ten, papa. He was ten in May." Then she told Carlson, "Papa'd just die if Gurdy went away to school. He told Miss Converse." She slid from his knee and curtsied to Carlson with, "I must take my French lesson, now. So, good afternoon." She was gone out of the room before Mark could kiss her again. She was always within reach of kisses and her warmth, curled on his lap was something consolatory when he did send Gurdy away to Saint Andrew's School in September 1910. Villay, his broker, and his lawyer advised the step. Olive Ilden wrote to him: "I am glad you have done the right thing. God knows I am no cryer up of the Public School System. But a Public School (I forget what you call private kennels for rich cubs in the States) is the only thing for the boy, in your situation. Ian Gail tells me that Gurdy is rather clever. I can imagine nothing worse than to be the son by adoption of a theatrical manager and a day scholar at a small New York school. But I know how miserable you are. Every one has sentimental accretions. I dislike seeing old women run down by motors, myself. No, I know how badly you feel, just now. But these be the fair rewards of them that love, you know? My own son is, of course, as the archangels. I hear through his Housemaster at Harrow that he smokes cigarettes and bets on all the races."

Mark tried to take Gurdy's absence with a fine philosophy. His broker and his lawyer assured him that Saint Andrew's was the best school in the country. But the red, Georgian buildings spread on the New England meadow and the impersonal stateliness of the lean Headmaster seemed a cold nest for Gurdy. He missed the boy with a dry and aching pain that wasn't curable by work on five new plays, Margot's plump warmth on his knee or contrived, brief intoxication. All his usual enchantments failed. He wore out the phonograph plates of the Danse Macabre and the Peer Gynt "Sunrise." He worried wretchedly and the disasters of October and November hardly balanced his interior trouble. Two, the more expensive two of the five Carlson and Walling productions failed. Carlson cheerfully indicated the shrinkage of applicants for jobs, hopeful playwrights and performers in the office above the 45th Street Theatre. Mark regretted twenty thousand dollars spent for shares in the Terriss Pictograph Company. Yet young Terriss was a keen fellow and Carlson thought something might come of motion pictures after a while. His friends sighed about Mark that the "show business was a gamble" and on visits to the farm Mark tried to be gay. A Military Academy had been built in Fayettesville on a stony field owned by Eddie Bernamer, the only heritage from Ber-

namer's Norwegian father. Gurdy's brothers were transferred to this polished school and Mark was soothed, in thinking that he'd made his own people grandees. He wished that he could ape the composure of the Bernamers and said so on a visit near Christmas time.

"But, great Cæsar," Bernamer blinked, kicking balled snow from a boot-heel, "This Saint Andrew's is a good school ain't it, even if it is up by Boston? The buildin's are fire proof, ain't they? Gurdy can't git out at night and raise Ned? Then what's got into you?"

"Oh, but—my God, Eddie! . . . I miss him."

"You're a fool," said his brother-in-law, staring at Mark, "You're doin' the right thing by the boy. You always do the right thing—like you done it by us. Sadie and me've got seven kids and I love 'em all. . . . They got to grow up. Stop bein' a fool. . . . You don't look well. Thin's a rail. Business bad?"

"We lost about forty-five thousand in two months."

"That countin' in the thousand you gave Sadie for her birthday?"

"No—Lord, no!"

Bernamer looked about the increased, wide farm and the tin roofed garage where Mark's blue motor stood pompous beside the cheap family machine. He drawled, "Well, you've sunk about

twenty-five thousand right here, bud. You let up on us. Save your money and set up that theatre of your own you want so. And I'm makin' some money on the side."

"How?"

The farmer grinned.

"That no good Healy boy—Margot's mamma's cousin, come soft soapin' round for a loan last summer. He and another feller have a kind of music hall place in Trenton. A couple of girls that sing and one of those movin' picsher machines. They wanted five hundred to put in more chairs. I fixed it I'd get a tenth the profit and they've been sendin' me twenty-five and thirty dollars a week ever since—and prob'ly cheatin' the eye teeth out of me. Dunno what folks go to the place for—but they do."

"Funny," said Mark.

A bugle blew in the grey bulk of the Military Academy. Boys came threading out across the flat snow between ice girt tree trunks. A triple rank formed below the quivering height of the flagpole where the wind afflicted the banner. The minute shimmer of brass on the blue uniforms thrilled Mark. The flag rippled down in folds of a momentary beauty. He sighed and turned back to the pink papered living room where Gurdy's small, fat legged sisters were clotted around Margot's rosy velvet on a leather lounge.

Old Walling smoked a sickening cheroot and smiled at all this prettiness. Margot's black hair was curled expansively by the damp air. She sat regally, telling her country cousins of Mastin's shop where Mark bought her clothes. She kissed every one good-bye when Mark's driver steered the car to the door and told Eddie Bernamer how well his furred moleskin jacket suited him. In the limousine she stretched her bright pumps on the footwarmer beside Mark's feet and said, "Oh, you've some colour, now, papa!"

"Have I? Cold air. D'you know you say na-ow and ca-ow, daughter, just like you lived on the farm the year 'round?"

Margot gave her queer, chiming chuckle which was like muffled Chinese bells. "Do I?"

"Pure New Jersey, honey. I used to. Mrs. Le Moyne used to guy me about it when I was a kid."

"Miss Converse says 'guy' is slang," Margot murmured.

"So it is, sister. We ought to go to England some summer pretty soon and let Miss Converse visit her folks."

"I'd love to. . . . I've never been abroad," she said, gravely stating it as though Mark mightn't know, "And every one goes abroad, don't they?"

"And what would you do abroad?"

She considered one pump and fretted the silver

buckle with the other heel. "I'd see people, papa."

"What people, sis?"

"Oh," she said, "every one!"

It set him thinking that she lived pent in his house with her stiff, alien governess. She was infinitely safe, so, but she might be bored; he recalled hot and stagnant evenings on the farm when his mind had floated free of the porch steps and his father's drawl into a paradise of black haired nymphs and illustrious warriors dressed from the engravings of the Centennial Shakespeare. Perhaps she should go to school? He consulted the governess, was surprised by her agreement, began to ask questions about schools for small girls.

"Miss Thorne's," said his broker, Villay, "She'll really be taught something there. . . . Miss Thorne was my wife's governess. I'll see if I can manage. . . ."

"Manage what?"

The broker clicked his cigarette case open, shut it and laughed, "You know what I mean, Walling."

"No, I don't."

"It was one thing getting Gurdy into Saint Andrew's. The Headmaster's a broad minded man. . . . My dear boy, you're Walling—Walling, of Carlson and Walling and you used to be

a matinée idol. . . . I don't like hurting your feelings."

"You mean you'll have to go down on your knees to this Miss Thorne to get her to take Margot?"

The broker said, "Not exactly down on my knees, Walling. I'll have it managed. The school's a corporation and my wife owns some stock." Mark groaned and was driven uptown thinking sourly of New York. Things like this made Socialists, he fancied, and looked with sympathy at an orator on a box in Union Square. But Gurdy was arriving by the five o'clock train at the Grand Central Station and the lush swirl of the crowd on Fifth Avenue cured Mark's spleen. Snow fluttered in planes of brief opal from the depth of assorted cornices above the exciting lights. A scarlet car crossed his at Thirty Fourth Street and bore a rigid, revealed woman in emerald velvet, like a figure of pride in a luminous shell. Her machine moved with his up the slope. Mark examined her happily. She chewed gum with the least movement of her white and vermilion cheeks. He despised her and felt strong against the pyramidal society in which Walling, of Carlson and Walling, was disdained. A cocktail in the Manhattan bar helped. The yellow place was full of undergraduates bustling away from Harvard and Yale. The con-

sciousness of dull trim boots and the black, perpetual decency of his dress raised Mark high out of this herd. At least he knew better than to smoke cigarettes with gold tips and the oblique, racy colours of neckties had no meaning for him beyond gaudiness. He strolled to the clapboards and icy labyrinthine bewilderment of the station, found the right gate and beheld uncountable ladies gathered together with children in leather gaiters, chauffeurs at attention smoking furtively. Here, he knew, was good breeding collected to take charge of its sons. The cocktail struggled for a moment with cold air. Mark retired to the rough wooden wall and watched this crowd. The mingling voices never reached plangency. The small girls and boys stirred like low flowers in a field of dark, human stalks. Colours, this winter, were sombre. The women walked with restraint, with tiny gestures that revealed nothing, with smiles to each other that meant nothing. He had a feeling of deft performance and a young fellow at the wall beside Mark chuckled, lighting a cigarette.

"A lot of rich dames waitin' for their kids from some goddam school up in Boston, see?"

Mark nodded. The young fellow gave the grouped women another stare and crossed the tight knees of his sailor's breeches. The nostrils of his shapely, short nose shook a trifle. He

tilted his flat cap further over an ear and winked comradely at Mark, "Wonder who the kids' fathers are, huh? A lot of rich dames. . . ." He spat and added, "Well, you can't blame 'em so much. Their husban's are all keepin' these chorus girls. But it's too much money, that's what. If they'd got to work some and cook an' all they wouldn't have time for this society stuff. It's too much money. If they'd got to cook their meals they wouldn't have time for carryin' on with all these artists an' actors an' things—" He broke off to snap at a girl who came hurrying from a telephone booth, "Say, what in hell? Makin' another date?"

"Honest, I was just phonin' mamma," the girl said.

"You took a time!—Phonin' her what?" He scowled, dominating the girl, "Huh?"

The girl argued, "I'd got to tell her sump'n, ain't I, Jimmy? I told her I was goin' to a show with a gerl fren'—"

"Some friend," said the sailor, laughed at himself and tramped off with his girl under an arm. The girl's cheap suit of beryl cloth shook out a scent of cinnamon. Mark sighed; she was young and pretty and shouldn't lie to her mother about men. But perhaps her mother was bad tempered, illiberal. Perhaps the flat was crowded with a preposterous family and exuded this slim

thing often, hoping a fragment of pleasure. A man couldn't be critical. Mark went to meet Gurdy and immediately forgot all discomforts in seeing that the boy had grown an inch, that the lashes about his dark blue eyes were blackening, in hearing him admit that he was glad to be at home again.

Gurdy's schoolmates had sisters at Miss Thorne's , it seemed, and Mark waited, fretting, through the Christmas holidays until his broker wrote that Miss Thorne would be pleased to have Margot as a pupil. Miss Converse, the governess, asked Mark bluntly how he had managed this matter.

"You Americans are extraordinary," she said, "You're so—so essentially undemocratic. It's shocking. But we must get Margot some decent frocks directly."

The bill for Margot's massed Christmas clothes lay on his desk. Mark started, protesting, "But—"

"I've been meaning to talk of this for some time," said the governess.

"Her clothes?"

"Her clothes.—My people were quite rich, you know, and I had things from Paris but really —O, really, Mr. Walling, you mustn't let her have every pretty frock she sees! I must say you've more taste than most women—quite re-

markable. But what will there be left for the child when she comes out?"

He wanted to answer that no frock devised of man could make Miss Converse other than a bulky, angular female but gave his meek consent to authority. He resented the dull serges and linens of Margot's school dress and Sunday became precious because he saw her in all glory, flounced in rose and sapphire. She was a miracle; she deserved brilliancies of toned silk to set off the pale brown of her skin, the crisp thickness of her hair. But in June on the *Cedric* he heard one woman say to another, "Positively indecent. Like a doll," when he walked the decks with Margot and the other woman's, "But she's quite lovely," didn't assuage that tart summary of Margot's costume. An elderly actress told him, "My dear boy, you mustn't overdo the child's clothes," and a fat lady from Detroit came gurgling to ask where he bought things for Margot. He knew this creature to be the wife of a motor king and looked down at her thoughtfully.

"I suppose you have daughters, yourself?"

"Yes, three. All of them married. But they still come to me for advice.—Mastin's? I thought so. Thank you so much."

He watched her purple linen frock ruck up in lumps as her fat knees bent over the brass sill of a door and pitied her daughters. He was

playing poker in the smoke room when Gurdy slid into the couch beside him and sat silently observing the game. The boy was lately thirteen and gaunt. His silence coated an emotion that Mark felt, disturbing as the chill of an audience on an opening night. Gurdy was angry. The milky skin below his lips twitched and wrinkled. The luncheon bugle blew. The game stopped and, when the other players rose, Mark could turn to him. "Was that fat woman in tortoise shell glasses talkin' to you?" The boy demanded.

"Yes."

"Well, it was a bet. I was reading in the parlour place. It was a bet. One of the women bet you got Margot's things in New York and the rest of 'em said Paris. And that fat hog—" Gurdy's voice broke—"said she didn't mind slumming. So she went off and talked to you. They all s-said that Margot looked like a poster."

This was horrible. Mark saw some likeness between Margot's pink splendour and the new posters clever people made for him. He must be wrong. He uncertainly fingered the pile of poker chips and asked Gurdy, "D'you think sister's—too dressed up?"

Gurdy loosed a sob that slapped Mark's face with its misery and dashed his hand into the piled chips. He said, "D-don't give a dam' what they

say about her. I hate hearin' them talk about you that way!"

Mark waited until the nervous sobs slacked. Then he asked, "Do they ever talk about me at your school, sonny?"

"No. Oh, one of the masters asked me why you didn't put on some play. Is there a play called the Cherry Orchard?"

"Russian. It wouldn't run a week." Mark piled up the chips and said, "I may be all wrong—Anyhow, don't you bother, son . . . God bless you."

Olive Ilden gave him her view while Margot and Gurdy explored the garden that opened from her Chelsea drawing room. She sat painting her lips with a perfumed stick of deep red and mimicked his drawl, "No, her things ar-r-ren't too bright, old man. She isn't too much dressed up. It's merely that this thin faced time of ours isn't dressed up to her. She's Della Robbia and we're —Whistler. It's burgherdom. Prudence. It's the nineteenth century. It's the tupenny ha'-penny belief that dullness is respectable. Hasn't she some Italian blood? Now Joan—my wretched daughter—simply revels in dowdiness. She's only happy in a jersey or Girl Guides rubbish. She's at Cheltenham, mixing with the British flapper. When she's at home she drives me into painting my face and putting dyed attire on

my head. If I had to live with Margot I shouldn't wear anything gayer than taupe."

He stared out at Margot whose pink frock revolved above her gleaming silver buckles on the crushed shell of the walk. Olive saw his face light, attaining for the second a holy glow. It was a window in the wall of dark night. He looked and doted. The woman wondered at him. He had all the breathless beauty of a child facing its dearest toy. His grey eyes dilated. In her own eyes she felt the dry threat of tears and said, "Old man, I'm sorry for you."

"Why?"

"Because you're such a dear and because you're a pariah. I don't know that all this garden party petting is good for our player folk but—over in your wilderness—no one seems to investigate the stage except professors and the police. It must be sickening. . . . What'll become of Margot when she's grown up?"

It had begun to worry him on the *Cedric*. He loosely thought that her friends from Miss Thorne's school would be kind to her. Wouldn't they? He said, "She's only ten, Olive," and sat brooding. It wasn't fair. Smart society, the decorous women of small gestures, hadn't any use for him. He looked at Olive who wrote letters to him and called him old man. She wrote books. She knew all the world. She had been

to the king's court and laughed about it. He went to shelter in her strange kindness and sighed, "It isn't fair. She ought to have—she ought to go anywhere she wants to."

"She probably will if there's anything in eyelashes," said Olive, "and Gurdy will go anywhere he wants to, by the shape of his jaw. I've been dissecting American society with horrific interest. It seems to have reached a lower level than British! You haven't even an intelligent Bohemia."

"There ain't many literary people," Mark reflected, "and they mostly seem to live in Philadelphia and Indiana, anyhow. Or over here. What's a man to do? I can't—"

"You can't do anything. Whistle the children in. There's a one man show. Stage settings. Italian. I haven't seen them and you should." She threw the stick of paint away and set about cheering him. She liked him, muddled in his trade, labouring after beauty, unaware of his own odd sweetness. She gave up the last weeks of the season, guiding him about London, watching him glow when Margot wanted a scarf of orange silk in Liberty's, when Gurdy demonstrated his Latin, not badly, before a tomb in Saint Paul's. Margot was the obvious idol, something to be petted and dressed. But the child had a rich attraction of her own, graces of placid curves, a quiet loveliness that missed stupidity.

"You don't like Margot," Olive told Gurdy in a waste of the British Museum.

The boy lied, "Of course I do," in his cracked voice but Olive took that as the product of good schooling, like his easy performance of airs on the piano. He was jealous of Margot and showed it so often that the woman wondered why Mark didn't see. But this wasn't the usual boy.

"You let him read anything he likes," she scolded Mark.

"Sure. Where's the harm? I haven't got the Contes Drolatiques at the house or any of those things. Aunt Edith used to make me read the Book of Kings when I was a kid. Oh, Gurd knows that babies don't come by express," said Mark, "He's lived in the country, too much."

"I thought the American peasantry entirely compounded of the Puritan virtues, old man."

"You missed your guess, then. You read a lot of American novels, Olive. Some day or other some writer's goin' to come along and write up an American country town like it is. The police will probably suppress the book. . . . My father and Gurdy's mamma are sort of scared because I've got the kid at a rich school. You mustn't believe all the stuff you see in the American magazines and papers about the wicked rich, Olive. I've met some of the rich roués at suppers and

so on. Put any of 'em alongside some of the hired men and clerks and things that were in my regiment in Cuba—or alongside Tommy Grover that's blacksmith at Fayettesville and they'd look like Sunday School teachers. I sort of wish the poor folks in the United States'd leave off yawping about the wicked rich and look after their own backyards a while! No, I don't take any stock in this country virtue thing. The only girl in Fayettesville that ever run off with a wicked drummer had morals that'd scare a chorus girl stiff. Who's the fellow that hangs 'round the stage door of a musical show? Nine times out of ten he's a kid from the country that's won twenty dollars at poker. Who's the fellow that —well—seduces the poor working girl? Once in a hundred it's a rich whelp in a dinner jacket. Rest of the time it's the boy in the next flat. When I was acting and used to get mash notes from fool women, were they from women on Fifth Avenue or Park Avenue? Not much! Stenographers and ladies in Harlem that had husbands travelling a good deal. You believe in talking about these kind of things out loud and I expect you're right."

"Gurdy's not handsome," said Olive, "but he's attractive—charming eyes—and women are going to like him a goodish bit, bye and bye. And man is fire. What moral precepts are you going to—"

"Just what my father told me. I'm going to tell him that he mustn't make love to a married woman and that he mustn't fool after an innocent girl unless he means matrimony—but God knows it's getting pretty hard to tell what an innocent girl is, these days! Nine tenths of 'em dress like cocottes."

"Old man, where did you pick up that very decent French accent?" Olive saw his blush slide fleetly from his collar to the red hair and added, "I hope it was honestly come by. You're a good deal of a Puritan for a sensualist."

"Oh . . . I am a sensualist, I guess. But, I ain't a hog."

Olive said, "No, that's quite true, my son. There's nothing porcine about you. My brother has a house this season and he's giving a dance tonight. There might be some pretty frocks."

"Didn't know you had a brother!"

"Sir Gerald Shelmardine of Shelmardine Cross, Hampshire. He's rather dreary. Will you come?"

She took him to several evening parties and his wooden coldness before a crowd was enchanting. It occurred to her that individuals wearied the man. He eyed pretty women, striking gowns, studied the decoration of ball-rooms. He confessed, "I'll never see any of them again and shouldn't remember them if I did. My memory

for people's no good—unless they're interestin' to look at. My god, look at that girl in purple. Her dressmaker ought to be hung! Skirt's crooked all across the front." He gave the girl in purple his rare frown then asked, "Well, where's some place in France, on the seashore, where I can take the kids until August?"

She recommended Royan and had from him a letter describing Margot's success among the ladies of a quiet hotel. His letters of 1912 and 1913 were full of Margot. Snapshots of the child dropped often from the thick blue envelopes. When he sent his thin book, "Modern Scenery" in the autumn of 1913 it was dedicated, "To my Daughter." The bald prose was correct, the photographs and plates were well selected. Mark wrote: "Gurdy went over it with a fine tooth comb to see if the grammar was O. K. Mr. Carlson is not well and we have four plays to bring in by December. Spoke at a lunch of a ladies' dramatic society yesterday. Forgot where I was and said Hell in the middle of it. They did not mind. Things seem to be changing a lot. I am pretty worried about one of our plays."

Olive saw in the New York *Herald* some discussion of this play and a furious reference to it on the editorial page, signed by a clergyman. This was at Christmas time when she was entertaining her tiresome brother at Ilden's house in

Suffolk. She folded the newspaper away, meaning to explore the business. She forgot the accident in the hurry of her attempt to reach a Scotch country house where her daughter Joan died of pneumonia on New Year's Day. The shock sent Olive into grey seclusion. Her husband was on the China station with his cruiser. She suddenly found herself worrying over the health of her son, then in the Fifth Form at Harrow, so took a cottage in Harrow village and there reflected on the nastiness of death while she wrote her next novel. The cottage was singularly dismal and the daughters of the next dwelling were pretty girls of thirteen and fourteen, with fair hair. "Sentimental analogy is the bane of life," she wrote to her husband, "I went to town yesterday for some gloves and saw the posters of Peter Pan on a hoarding in Baker Street. Joan liked it so. So I went to the theatre and squandered five sovereigns in stalls and gave the tickets to these wretched girls who would infinitely prefer a cinema, naturally. However I managed to laugh on Saturday. The news had just reached Mark Walling by way of Ian Gail who is in the States trying to sell his worst and newest play. Mark cabled me a hundred words quite incoherent and mostly inappropriate."

Three days later Olive came in from a walk and Mark opened the door of the stupid cottage.

When she drew her hands away from his stooped face they were hot and wet.

"But, my dear boy," she said, presently, "what blessing brought you over? In the middle of your season, too."

"I'm in trouble. See anything in the papers about the Mayor stoppin' a play we put on?—I don't blame the Mayor, for a minute. Mr. Carlson wanted it . . . Well, it was stopped and some of the newspapers took it up. And then Mr. Carlson had a sort of stroke. His mind's all right but his legs are paralyzed. Won't ever walk again." His voice drummed suddenly as if it might break into a sob. He passed his fingers over the red hair and went on, "I've got him up at my house."

"Of course," said Olive.

"Sure. The doctors say he'll last four or five years, maybe.—Say you've always said we're a nation of prudes. Look at this," and he dragged from a black pocket a note on formal paper. Olive read: "The Thorne School, Madison Avenue and Sixty Sixth Street. December 28th, 1913. My dear Mr. Walling, Will you be so good as to call upon me when it is possible in order to discuss Margaret's future attendance. It seems kindest to warn you that several parents have suggested that—"

"What is this nonsense?" Olive asked, "What's the child been doing?"

"Doing? Nothin'! It's this damned play!"

"You mean that there were women who seriously asked this Miss Thorne to have Margot withdrawn because you'd produced a risqué farce? But that's—"

His wrath reached a piteous climax in, "Oh, damn women, anyhow! . . . Well I took her out. My broker could have fixed the thing up. What's the use? Well, I brought her over with me. She's at the Ritz. What's the best girls' school in England?"

Olive said, "Oh, I'll take her," saw him smile and began to weep.

V

Margot

GURDY BERNAMER kept his twentieth birthday in a trench. The next week his regiment was withdrawn from the line to a dull village where Gurdy was taking a warm bath in a zinc tub behind the Mairie when a German aeroplane crossed above and lifted his attention from a Red Cross copy of "The Brook Kerith" which he read while he soaked. He dropped the dialectics of George Moore and watched, then saw the whitewashed wall of the yard bend in slowly, its cracks blackening. He spent a month in hospital getting the best of the wandering, deep wound that began at his right hip and ended in his armpit. He wrote to Mark, "I kept trying to remember a quotation from Twain's Tramp Abroad. 'Not by war's shock or war's shaft. Shot with a rock on a raft.' They dug a piece of zinc out of me. I feel fairly well. Mrs. Tilford Arbuthnot has the Y. M. C. A. cafeteria in Bordeaux. Her brother was with me at Saint Andrew's. She brings me novels and things. I think she has a secret passion for you.

She says you were a great actor. My nurse also thinks you were. Her name is Zippah Coe and she looks it. She says the immorality of French women is too awful for words. She is coming to take my temperature." The temperature displeased the nurse and Gurdy passed into a daze. The wet hemlocks beyond the window sometimes turned cerise, inexcusably. Pneumonia succeeded his influenza.

Through all this lapse he meditated and drew toward a belief that life was a series of meaningless illusions, many painful. He expanded "All the world's a stage." Suicide wasn't universal as some of the players acquired a thrilling interest in their parts, rose to be directors—Wilsons, Northcliffes, Millerands. It was satisfactory to know this at twenty. His education was complete in its departments passional, athletic and philosophical. Saint Andrew's school. Two and a half years of Yale in smart company. The miscellany of his regiment. He must certainly begin maturity as a critic. He lay composing an essay on the illusory value of passion in a loop of paradoxes which vanished as his pulse improved. Then he was conscious that a surgeon took interest in him. Orderlies came from the hospital adjutant inquiring. Gurdy sat up, read the papers and accepted five thousand francs in mauve and blue bills from a bank agent. It seemed

that Mark had run him to earth by cabling. Soon he was uniformed again and given orders that assigned him to duty in a Paris military bureau. There Gurdy found Mark's broker, decorated as a Major.

"Of course, I got you up here," said Major Villay. "Why not?"

"But—" With recovery Gurdy had shed some sense of illusions. He stood thinking of his regiment rather sourly, rather sadly.

The broker-major grunted, "Rot, Gurdy. You're all Mark's got—Son, and all that. Dare say Margot'll marry some Englishman. Anyhow, it's all over. Bulgaria's on the skids. Mark thinks too much of you."

Gurdy was subtly pleased. He stood thinking of Mark fondly, with annotations in contempt. Mark was nothing but a big blunderer among the arts, a man who couldn't see the strength of Russian drama or disillusioned comedy, who didn't admire Granville Barker's plays. But if Margot stayed in England Gurdy could steer his uncle toward proper productions. Mark meant well, very well. He had done some fine things, had a feeling for vesture, anyhow.

"I see the Celebrities people have bought the Terriss Pictograph," said Major Villay, "Exchange of stock. Funny. Mark hates the movies so and he makes twenty thousand a year

out of them. And the movie people gave him fifteen thousand for that rotten Gail play. Here, take this stuff and translate it. I can probably get you a pass over to London if you want to see Margot."

Gurdy didn't want to see her. His last view of Margot had been in the stress of her removal from Miss Thorne's school. Mark had gone five times to England on visits of a month, reported her beautiful, witty, petted by Mrs. Ilden, by Mrs. Ilden's friends. But he wrote her a note dutifully and got an answer in three lines. "Glad you are out of the silly mess. Try to run over. Frightfully rushed catching a train for Devon. More later." He was not offended. He thought that Margot disliked him as he disliked her. He threw the note into the waste basket and went on translating French political comments into English.

The Armistice broke on the third week of this employment. The bureau became a negation of labour. Gurdy roamed contentedly about the feverish, foolish city with various friends—young officers, sergeant majors on agreeable posts. He was tall, still pallid from sunless convalescence. His uniform happened to fit a long, loosely moving body and he liked dancing. He equably observed male diversion with his dark blue eyes and was often diverted. This might be the col-

lapse of known society, the beginning of a hygienic and hardworked future. This churning of illusions might bring something fresh. Men might turn to new programs of stupidity, exhausting the old. He danced and was courted. He wrote to Mark, choosing words: "There will be plays about this, I suppose. I do not think any one will believe it fifty years from now. It is an upheaval of cheap pleasure. I keep thinking how Carlson calls people hogs." He hesitated, continued: "I do not know that there is an excuse for all of it. Some of the Americans make bigger hogs of themselves than is necessary." Then he destroyed the letter. After all, Mark was your typical patriot. He took America seriously, the American soldier seriously, the American Red Cross had profited by his sentiment. There was no point in hurting Mark. Gurdy wrote a gay tale of driving through Paris in a vegetable cart with a drunken Australian colonel and went to dine at Luca's.

From Luca's his party retired to the Opera Comique, stopped to drink champagne in the bar and stayed there until it wasn't worth while to hear the last act. "And," said a youth from San Francisco, "we can go to Ariana Joyce's. She's giving a party."

"But she's dead," Gurdy objected.

"Damn healthy corpse! Come ahead and see if she's dead!"

They floated in a taxicab along Paris. The machine slipped from the lavender rush of some broad street up a slope and Gurdy stumbled into a brilliance of laughing people where his guide pushed him toward a green dais and hissed, "She won't know you from Adam. Tell her you're from Chicago."

Her rounded beauty had come to death under much fat. She lolled in a red chair waving a peacock fan. Gurdy's friend kissed the arm she thrust out and told her, "You look awfully well, Miss Joyce."

The dancer nodded, beaming down at her painted feet in their sandals of blue leather. Through her nose she said, "Feelin' fine," then in throaty refinement, "Do get Choute Aurec to dance. She's so difficult now she's had a success. So very difficult—Rodin used to say—" Her empty and tired stare centred on Gurdy. With a vague dignity she asked, "Do I know you?"

"Corporal Bernamer's from Chicago," the guide said.

Miss Joyce planted a thumb under her chin and drawled, "De mon pays!" then her eyes rolled away. She reached for a silver cup on a table and forgot her guests. Looking back,

Gurdy saw her famous head thrown back and, for a moment, comely as she drank.

"Bakst," said his friend, jerking a hand about to show the walls of grey paint where strange beasts cavorted among spiked trees, above the mixed and coloured motion of the crowd. An American was playing ragtime at the gold piano, in a clot of women. Choute Aurec was teaching a British aviator some new dance. Beyond, a mass of women and officers surrounded a lean shape on a divan. They gazed, gaped, craned at the young man. His decorations twinkled in the glow. His blue chest stirred when he spoke and his teeth flashed. Gurdy's companion murmured, "They say he's got ten times more sense than most prize-fighters. . . . I think that thin man's Bernstein—the one with a dinner jacket. You get drinks in the next room. Oh, there's Alixe!"

He ran off. Gurdy slid through the mingling harlots and warriors into the next, cooler room, fringed with men drinking champagne. An American colonel glared at him over a glass, shifted the glare back to a handsome ensign who had penned a blond girl in a corner. Gurdy found a tray covered with sandwiches and ate one, pondering. He wondered whether the ensign would go on trying to kiss the girl if he knew that she had been, last month, on trial for the technical murder of an octogenerian general. Well,

morals were illusory, too. Some one slapped his shoulder. He saw Ian Gail. The playwright was dressed as a British captain. "Intelligence," he said, "I'm too old and adipose for anything else. And we shouldn't be here, should we? A poisonous place."

"Funny mixture."

"Pride," said Gail, "The poor woman can't stand being neglected so she gives these atrocious parties. But it's nice running into you, old son. I'd a letter from Mark yesterday. He told me you were here and I was coming to look you up tomorrow in any case. I'm just from London. Olive Ilden and Margot are hoping you'll get leave to come over for Christmas. Can't you?"

"I don't quite see how I can, sir."

"But do try. I think you'd cheer Olive up. Margot's a jolly little thing but frightfully busy celebrating the peace. How decent of Mark to let her stay with Olive! I fancied he'd take her back to the States directly the war began."

"Submarines," Gurdy said, "But why does Mrs. Ilden need cheering up, sir? She used to be an awfully cheerful sort of person."

"Oh," said Gail, "her boy—Bobby."

"I hadn't heard he—"

"Fell a year ago. Do try to run over. . . . How pretty Margot is!"

Gurdy ate another sandwich, correcting cham-

pagne. There would be long illusions after this war. Grudges, idealized memories of trivial folk. But he was sorry for Olive Ilden. He said, "I'll try to get over. I'll—"

Choute Aurec ran through the doorway, yelped, "Ariane va danser, messieurs, dames!" and darted out again.

"What did that incontinent little brute say?" Gail asked.

"I think Miss Joyce is going to dance," said Gurdy.

"It's disgusting," the Englishman snorted, "Some cad always flatters her into dancing and the poor woman falls on her face. Don't go."

The doorway filled with watchers. Women giggled. Some one played slowly the first bars of the Volga Barge song. There was an applausive murmur—then a thud. "She's fallen," said Gail and suddenly Gurdy remembered that this was an American, that he had seen her dance to the jammed ecstasy of the Metropolitan. The women in the doorway squealed their amusement. The crowd parted and he saw the green gauze wrapping her limp body as two Frenchmen carried her back to her throne. The crowd applauded, now.

"Swine," said Gail.

Gurdy summoned up his philosophy and shrugged. The young prize-fighter came through

the press and snapped to a civilian, "Je me sauve, Etienne!"

"Mais—"

"C'est nauséabonde! Elle était artiste, vois tu? Allons; je file!"

"The boy's right," said the playwright, "Sickening. Come along." They passed through the beginning of a dance in the great chamber and down the stairs into an alley where motors were lined. In a taxicab Gail concluded, "End of an artist."

Gurdy thought this sententious but a queer oppression filled him. It was hideous that any one should finish as a butt with a prize-fighter for apologist. Of course, life was nothing but a meaningless spectacle. Money, something to drink, a dancing floor drew this crowd together. The fat dancer was rather funny, if one looked it all over. Mark could contrive the whole effect on a stage if he wanted.

"Mark writes that he's almost decided to build his theatre in West Forty Seventh."

"I wish he'd hurry," said Gurdy, "He's been planning the Walling for years. Funny. He told Mr. Frohman all about it just before the *Lusitania.*"

"Poor Frohman," the Englishman murmured, "Awfully decent to me."

There should be a certain decency, a cool

restraint in life, the philosopher mused. He thought of this next morning when Choute Aurec telephoned hopefully for a loan of a thousand francs. By noon he had discovered that he was flatly homesick for Mark and thought of Margot in London as the nearest familiar creature. The bureau permitted his departure. He crossed a still Channel and made his way to London in the company of an earnest Red Cross girl from Omaha who wanted Fontainebleau turned into a reform school for rescued Parisian street walkers. She had a General for uncle and Gurdy feared that she would be able to forward her plan to the French government.

"D'you really feel that we've any business telling the French what to do with their own homes?"

"But Fontainebleau could be made into a real home, Corpril!"

"So could Mount Vernon."

"It's too small. Fontainebleau's so huge. All those rooms."

"You don't think that it's any use just letting it stay beautiful?"

"But it isn't really beautiful," the young woman retorted, "It's so much of it Renaissance, you know?"

He was still hating this vacuity when the taxicab left him at Mrs. Ilden's house in Chelsea. The butler told him that "Lady Ilden" was not at

home and guided him through grey halls to a bedroom. Gurdy washed, tried to recall Ilden's rank in the British navy and the name of Olive's last novel. He strolled downstairs and met Margot in the lower hall without knowing it. He saw a slim person in stark yellow reading a letter and was startled when the girl said, "Good God, they didn't tell me you'd got here! Come and help me stick this holly about in the library."

She thrust a bowl filled with small sprays of holly into his hands and frowned between the wings of her black, bobbed hair. He remembered her plump. She was slender. She still wore glittering pumps with silver buckles. When she chuckled it was in the former chime. She exclaimed, "Of course! Uncle Eddie was born in Norway, wasn't he?"

"I think dad was born in the steerage, coming over," Gurdy said.

"You're not at all American, anyhow," she announced, "and that's a relief. I'm quite mad about Scandinavians. Only sensible people in Europe. Come along. There's a rehearsal in half a minute and—"

"Rehearsal?"

"Charity show. Barge along. This way."

He grinned and followed her into the long library where she tossed bits of holly to and fro

on the shelves. She said, "Cosmo Rand's rehearsing us. Better not tell that to dad. He mightn't like it."

"Who's Cosmo?"

"Cora Boyle's husband. They're playing here. Don't get shocked about it."

"Don't see anything to get shocked about. So Cora Boyle's over here again? What's she playing?"

"A silly melodrama. She's at the Diana. Saw her the other night. She's getting fat. Ought to be a law against fat women wearing old rose."

"You've lost some weight," Gurdy said.

"Work, old thing, work! Sewing shirts for snipers. Dancing with convalescents.—It's beastly you've got so tall. I hate looking up at men."

Gurdy laughed down at her and asked, "When did Mrs. Ilden get to be Lady Ilden?"

"Jutland. It's just the Bath, not a baronetcy. Olive's at church."

"I thought she was agnostic?"

Margot said gently, "It takes them that way, rather often. She's been to church a goodish bit ever since Bobby—"

"Oh, yes. Young Ilden was killed.—What sort of person was he?"

"One of the silent, strong Empire builders—but nice about it. . . . Olive's aged, rather." She

planted the last holly spray on the lap of a guilt Buddha then smiled at Gurdy across a yellow shoulder, "I'd forgotten how blue your eyes are. Almost violet. Goes with your hair. Very effective. . . . Your chin's still too big. . . . Oh, a letter from Dad this morning. He was thinking of running over. But Carlson's worse. . . . D'you know, it'd be a noble deed to poison Carlson. There he is stuck in the house. Why don't useless people like that dry up and blow away?"

"I don't think he's useless," Gurdy argued, "He makes Mark put on a comedy now and then. He swears better than any one I know. And you ought to be grateful to him. If Mark hadn't had him for company you'd probably have been hauled home long ago."

Margot opened a Russian, lead box on a table and lit a cigarette. She said, "Don't think so. Dad's never made the slightest sign of hauling me home. Especially after Mr. Frohman. . . . Ugh! I almost had nervous prostration, when I heard Dad had sailed after the *Lusitania!*" Her lids fell and shook the astonishing lashes against the pale brown of her cheeks. Then she chuckled, "The joke is, I'd as soon have gone home long ago. I'm mad about Olive, of course. And I've had all sorts of a good time. But I'd rather be home. . . . How's your mother?"

He was answering when the butler barked names from the doorway. Margot whispered, "Run. The rehearsal. Go hide in the drawing room. These are all bores."

He passed out through a group of men and girls, encountered a Colonel of the British General Staff in the hall and was cordially halted. He stood discussing military shoes with this dignitary as Olive Ilden let herself into the hall. Gurdy recalled her slim and tall. Now that he looked down, she seemed stout, no longer handsome but the deep voice remained charming as it rose from her black veils. She led him off into the drawing room and said, at once, "Margot's pretty, isn't she?"

"Yes. Mark's been raving about her but I thought—"

"You thought he was idealizing, after his customary manner? He sent me a picture of you, so I'm not surprised. Don't sit in that chair. It's for pygmies. . . . I want to talk about Margot and it's likely we won't have another chance. You two don't write each other letters. Had you heard from Mark that she wants to play?"

"Play?"

"Be an actress. I thought I'd better warn you," Olive laughed, "I don't know when it started. I know Mark wouldn't like it. Otherwise the child's the delight of my life." She sank

into a couch and asked, "Now, what are these diplomatic idiots doing in Paris? I don't like the look of things."

"Arranging for another war."

"I do hope they'll arrange it for twenty years from date. I'll be past sixty then and I won't care. I'll be able to sit and grin at the women who're going through what—Only, of course, I shouldn't grin. I'm a true blue Briton of the old breed when it comes to an emotion. I simply can't enjoy an emotion when it's my emotion. . . . Had you ever thought that that's why bad plays and cinema rubbish are so popular? It's the unreality of the passions. . . . I dare say that's why I've just been to church. . . . Perhaps that's why Margot wants to go on the stage. She's never had an emotion worth shedding a tear for. Well, how's Mark?"

"Putting on three plays after Christmas and thinks they're all winners."

She drew her hands over her eyes and murmured, "Mark's extraordinary. Endless enthusiasm. Like a kiddy with a box of water colours. I suppose it's belief. He really believes in his job. . . . I once thought he needed education. . . . If he'd been educated, he couldn't have believed so hard. . . . There has to be something childish to get along in the theatre. . . . If he were worldly wise he'd have known half

these plays were rubbish and the rest not very good. . . . But I'm not sure what a good play is, Gurdy. Tell me. You're young, so you should know."

He flushed, then laughed and asked what play Margot and her friends rehearsed. The loud, spaced voices came across the hall. He felt an unruly curiosity stir.

"It's a one act thing of Ronny Dufford's—Colonel the Honourable Ronald Dufford. Quite a pal of Margot's. That was he talking to you in the hall just now—the Brass Hat. What are you laughing at?"

"Wondering what would happen to an American General Staff man if he wrote plays. . . . Dufford? Mark put a thing of his on in nineteen sixteen. It failed."

"His things are rather thin. He's been nice to Margot, though. He took her about when I was in mourning— He's a good sort. Forty eight or so. I dare say he lectured Margot on the greatness of Empire and the sacredness of the House of Lords. It didn't hurt her. She hears enough about the sacredness of the plain people, in the studios."

"I thought you were an anti-imperialist and an anarchist?"

The tired woman laughed, "So I am. . . . It was tremendous fun being all the right things

when I was young and anarchists were rather few. I expect you're a cubist and a communist and agnostic and don't believe in marriage. So many of them don't. Then they get married to prove the soundness of their theory and get hurt; then they're annoyed because they're hurt and get interested in being married. Most amusing to watch. . . . The world's got past me and I'm frightened by it.—We had such a good time railing at the Victorians and repression. And now all the clever young things tell their emotions to cab drivers and invent emotions if they haven't any.—All the gestures have changed and I feel—You look rather like Mark. You know he was stopping at Winchester when he heard Margot's father'd been killed. I tried to shock him. He. . . . Oh, do go and watch them rehearse, Gurdy! . . . I've just come from church. . . . The music's made me silly. I don't know what I'm saying. . . ." The artifice smashed into a sob. Gurdy swung and hurried across the hall. Certainly, the woman's illusion of pain was notably real.

He sat smoking on a window seat of the library and tried to follow the rehearsal at the other end of the wide room. The men and girls strode about talking loudly. A slender man in grey broke the chatter from time to time and gave directions in a level, pleasing voice. This must

be Cosmo Rand, the husband of Cora Boyle. Gurdy looked at him with interested scorn but the amateurs took his orders in docile peace and only Margot answered him from a deep green chair, "Rot, Cossy! I'm supposed to be lost in thought, aren't I? Then I shan't look interested when Stella giggles. Go on, Stella."

Gurdy became intent on her posture in the dark chair. She was smoking and her hair appeared through the vapour like solid, carved substance. She seemed fixed, a black and yellow figure on the green. A vaporous halo rose in the lamplight above her head. He stirred when she spoke again, shifting, and a silver buckle sent a spark of light flitting across the rug. He remembered that she had Italian blood from her grandmother. She looked Italian. Mark was right. She was beautiful in no common fashion. The other girls vibrating against the shelves were mere bodies, gurgling voices.—The butler stole down the room and spoke to Cosmo Rand who, in turn, spoke aloud.

"I say, Margot, Cora's brought the motor around. Might I have her in? Chilly and she's been feeling rather seedy."

A tall woman in black velvet entered as if this were a stage and reposed herself in a chair. Gurdy had never seen Cora Boyle perform. She was familiar from pictures when she drew up a

veil across an obvious beauty of profile and wide eyes. Presently she commenced a cigarette and the motion of lighting it was admirably effected. An expanding, heavy scent of maltreated tobacco welled from the burning roll between her fingers. The line of her brows was prolonged downward with paint. The whole mask was tinted to a false and gleaming pallor. Grey furs were arranged about the robustness of her upper body. She was older than Mark, Gurdy's father said. She must be passing forty. She should be weary of tight slippers. A glance stopped Gurdy's meditation. He looked away at Margot's effortless stroll along the imagined footlights. Cora Boyle spoke to him in a flat and pinched whisper.

"Isn't your name Bernamer?" He bowed. She came to sit with him on the window seat and dusted ash from her cigarette into the Chinese bowl. Her eyes explored his face with a civil amusement. "You look awfully like your father. You startled me. Let me see. . . . You and Miss Walling live with Mark, don't you? Sweet, isn't she? And how is Mark? I've played over here so long that I've rawther lost touch. Mr. Carlson's still alive?"

"Oh, yes. He's bedridden, you know? Lives with Mark."

She inhaled smoke, nodding.

"That's so characteristic of Mark, isn't it?

But of course, Carlson was kind to him. The dear old man's bark was much worse than his bite. Good heavens how frightened I was of him! I see that Mark acted in a couple of Red Cross shows? I expect that all his old matinée girls turned out and cried for joy. . . . But I do think that Mark was something more than a flapper's dream of heaven. Still, he must like management better. He never thought more of acting than that it was a job, did he?" She sighed, "One has to think more of it than that to get on."

Gurdy wished that this woman didn't embarrass him, resenting her perfumed cigarette and the real, frail loveliness of her hands. The embarrassment ended. Rand told the amateurs that they weren't half bad and departed with his wife, a trim, boyish figure behind her velvet bulk. Colonel Dufford implored the grouped players to learn their lines. Margot was much kissed by the other girls, dismissed them and came in a sort of dance step to ask Gurdy what he thought of her acting.

"Couldn't hear you. I had to talk to Miss Boyle. Ugly voice she has. Are people really crazy about her here?"

Margot frowned and pursed her lips, tapping a cigarette on a nail. "Oh, she has a following. They don't dither about her as they do over

Elsie whatsername and some of the other Americans. Dull, isn't she?"

"Very. She made a point of talking about Mark.—Lady Ilden's all broken up, isn't she?"

"She's too repressed," Margot explained, "Tried not to show it when Bobby fell and so she's been showing it ever since. And Sir John's been at sea constantly and that's a strain. He's in Paris, now.—You don't show your feelings at all, do you? I was watching you talk to the Boyle and you beamed very nicely. And you must have been bored. One of those rather sticky women. Come and play pool. There's an American table."

He played pool and stolidly listened to her ripple of comments. She had a natural disrespect for the American army that flashed up. "The men did all they could, I dare say, but, my God, Gurdy, what thugs the officers were! Some of them turned up at a garden party where the King dropped in and he went to speak to one. The thing was cleaning its nails in a corner and it shook hands with its pocket knife in the other hand. I fainted and Ronny Dufford lugged me home in a taxi. I say, do let me have St. Ledger Grant do a pastel of you. Dad would love it and St. Ledger needs ten pounds as badly as any one in Cheyne Walk."

"Who's Sillijer?"

"Artist. Poor bloke who got patriotic and lost a leg in the Dardanelles mess. Serve him right and so on but he's ghastly poor."

"You a pacifist?"

"Rather!"

"That's why you like the Scandinavians? Because they stayed out?"

"Right. I forgive you though because you're young and simple and your legs are rather jolly in those things." She twisted her head to stare at his leggings and the black hair rose, settled back into its carved composure below the strong, shaded lamp. The clear red of her lips parted as she laughed, "Not a blush? Made the world safe for democracy and aren't proud of it? How did your friends get through? That rather sweet lad who used to come to lunch when you were at school? Lacy—?"

"Lacy Martin. Lost a leg."

She frowned. "Doesn't matter so much for a chap like that with billions but—the artists. I must have St. Ledger do you. We'll go there tomorrow. I had Cosmo—Rand have himself done."

Gurdy made a shot and said, "Rand's a much prettier subject than I'd be."

"Don't get coy, my lad! You're rather imposing and you know it.—Like to meet Gilbert Chesterton? You used to read his junk. I can

have you taken there. Never met him, myself."

"No thanks.—What's that bell?"

"Dress for dinner. You can't. I must.—I say, you're altogether different from what I thought you'd be."

"What did you think?"

"I couldn't possibly tell you but I'm damned glad you're not. The butler can make cocktails. Dad taught him in nineteen seventeen."

The butler brought him an evil mixture. Gurdy emptied it into the fireplace and leaned on the pool table wondering what Margot had expected. It didn't matter, of course. Yet she might recall him as a sixteen year old schoolboy much absorbed in polevaults and stiff with conceit for some acquirements in English letters. How people changed and how foolish it was to be surprised at change! Sophomoric. Mark really knew a pretty woman when he saw one. A man of genuine taste outside the selection of plays.—She must know London expertly. She must have a sense of spectacle. She must meet all conditions with this liberal, successful woman as a guide. If she wanted a pastel made for Mark she should have it. Gurdy dusted chalk from his leggings, evenly taped about the long strength of his calves, strolled into the drawing room and played the languid movement of the Faun's Afternoon. Illusory or not there was always beauty in

the blended exterior of things. A man should turn from the inner crassness to soothe himself with the fair investiture, with the drift of delicate motions that went in colour and music.—Olive thought him like Mark as she came in. She was worried because Gail had written of meeting the boy on Montmartre.

"You've been enjoying Paris?"

"More or less. It's a holy show, just now. I don't suppose the barkeepers—and other parasites—will ever have such a chance again."

"I hope you've not been in too much mischief. Ian Gail wrote me that he met you in some horrid hole or other."

"A party at Ariana Joyce's. I wasn't doing any more harm there than the rest of the Allied armies. But it was pretty odious." The memory jarred into the present satisfaction. He halted his long fingers on the keys and Margot came rustling in, her gown of sheer black muslin painted with yellow flowers and gold combs in her hair.

"Were you playing L'Après Midi?—And he's only twenty, Olive! Most Americans don't rise to respectable music until they've lost all their money and have to come and live over here. Any nails in your shoes, Gurdy? We're going to a dance."

"Where?" asked Olive.

"Something for war widows at Mrs. Rossiter-Rossiter-Rossiter's—that fat woman from Victoria. I promised some one or other I'd come. We'll go in time for supper."

The charity dance seemed less fevered than dances in Paris. There were ranks of matrons about the walls of a dull, long room. At midnight Margot rescued him from a girl who was using him as an introduction to American economics and found a single table in the supper hall. Here the batter of ill played ragtime was endurable and the supping folk entertained him.

"The country's so ghastly with houses shut and no servants that most people have stuck to town," Margot said, refusing wine. "Lot of eminences here. Who're you looking at?"

"The dark girl in pink. She's familiar."

"She should be. She has a press agent in New York. Lady Selene Tucker. She's going to marry that man who looks like a Lewis Baumer picture in Punch as soon as every one's in town again and she can get Westminster Abbey and he can get his mother shipped to New Zealand, or somewhere. His mother will drink too much and then tell lies about Queen Victoria. She's rather quaint. She sues for libel every time any one writes a novel with a dissolute peeress in it. Frightfully self-conscious. Don't people who insist on telling you how depraved

they are make you rather ill? They always seem to think they've made such a good job of it. And I could think of much worse things to do. —How nice your hair is! Like Uncle Eddie's."

"Thanks. Who's the skinny woman with the pearls?"

Margot put aside the palm branch that shadowed her chin and frowned. "It looks like my namesake, Mrs. Asquith, from this angle.—No, it's Lady Flint. Oh, look at the big brute in mauve. Lovely, isn't she?"

He looked at the shapely, fair woman without interest. The round of Margot's forearm took his eyes back.

"Lovely? Why?"

"So glad you don't think so. One gets so sick of hearing women gurgled about as wonders. I think it was Salisbury who said she was the most beautiful woman alive. And she goes right on, you know? Once you get fixed here as frightfully beautiful or witty you can die of old age before they stop saying so. Such a fraud! It's just what dad says about all the managers and stars in New York being myths. All those legends about his being a woman hater and—who's the man who's supposed to never hire a chorus girl until he's seen her au naturel? Such piffle!"

"But they like being myths," Gurdy laughed.

"Oh, every one does, of course. Some one started a yarn about me—don't tell dad this—that I was the daughter of some frightfully rich American banker and that my mother was a Spanish dancer. Olive was wild with rage. But it was rather fun.—I say, I'm sick of this, Gurdy. Do make dad order me home." She lit a cigarette, let her lashes drop and ignored a man who bowed, passing. Gurdy thought this was Cosmo Rand and said so. Margot shrugged. "He rehearses us every day. Decent sort. People like him.—But do make dad have me come home."

Gurdy pondered. Mark now knew a few gentlewomen, the wives of authors and critics. He had mannerly friends outside the theatre, had drilled smart war theatricals. The girl could move beyond this wedge of certainty wherever she chose. But Gurdy said, "You might not like New York."

"But I want to see it! It's hardly pleasant seeing dad about once every year for two weeks or so. I happen to love him. You mean I shan't be recognized as a human being by the fat ladies in the Social Register? That'll hardly break my heart, you know? The world is so full of a number—Is that God save the—"

The supping people rose in a vast puff of smoke from abandoned cigarettes. Officers stif-

fened. The outer orchestra jangled the old tune badly. The sleek gowns showed a ripple of bending knees. The prince went nodding down the room toward an inner door with a tiny clink of bright spurs as his staff followed him.

"They say he's going to the States. I should like to be there to see the women make fools of themselves. And Grandfather'll be so furious because every one'll talk about a damned Britisher.—Finish your coffee. I want to dance again."

She danced with a smooth, lazy rhythm and Gurdy felt a brusque jealousy of all the men who danced with her, after him. He was angry because he so soon liked her, against reason. It was folly to let himself be netted by a girl who showed no signs of courting him. He watched her spin, her black skirt spreading, with Cosmo Rand. The man danced gracefully, without swagger. He might be amusing, like many actors. Gurdy pulled his philosophy together and talked about Mark's plan of the Walling Theatre while they drove home.

"Dad's wanted a shop of his own so long," she sighed, "And it'll be quite charming. He does understand colours! Wish he wouldn't wear black all the time. . . . I always feel fearfully moral at two in the morning. I'm going to lecture you."

"What about?"

"You're so damned chilly. You always were, of course. Don't you like anything?"

They came to the Ilden house before he could answer and Margot didn't repeat the question all the week he stayed in London. They were seldom alone. Lady Ilden seemed to want the girl near her. There were incessant callers. Men plainly flocked after the dark girl. Her frankness added something to the wearisome chaff of teatime and theatre parties, to the dazing slang of the young officers. Gurdy speculated from corners, edged in at random dances. But his blood had caught a fresh pulsation. He felt a trail of mockery in the artifice of Lady Ilden's talk as if the tired woman observed him falling into love and found it humorous. She said once, "I was afraid you'd grown up too fast. And you've not," but he let the chance of an argument slide by his preoccupation with the visible flutter of Margot's hands pinning a tear in her yellow frock. His resistance weakened although he hunted repugnances, tried to shiver when the girl swore.

"Profanity's a sign of poor imagination," he told her.

"The hell you say," said Margot. "Haven't turned out on the heavy side, have you, Gurdy? I bar serious souls. War shaken you to the

foundations? Cheeryo! You'll get over it." And she walked upstairs singing,

"There ayn't a goin' to be no wa-ah,
Now we've got a king like good King Hedward,
There ayn't a goin' to be no wa-ah.
'E 'ates that sort of fing,
Muvvers, don't worry,
Now we've got a king like Hedward,
Peace wiv 'onor is 'is motter,
So, God sive the king!"

VI

Gurdy

IN mid March the lease of the ground in West 47th Street was brought to Mark's office. He signed it and gave the attorney his check. A wrecking company was busy with the destruction of the cheap hotel that stood where the Walling Theatre would stand complete in November. The notary and witnesses withdrew. Mark sat drumming his fingers on his desk, trying to rejoice. Irritations worked in him; Carlson would be the only audience of his joy; the ground was bought with money made too largely in moving pictures. He was so close upon the fact grown from his dream that it frightened him. The Walling was real, at last. He should bubble with pleasure and couldn't. He sighed and strolled over to West 45th Street where he watched the final act of "Redemption" for the sake of the dive scene, got his usual happy shudder from this massed, intricate shadow and the faces suddenly projected into the vicious light. He must have such scenes at the Walling. He must find somewhere a play made of scenes, many and diverse, changing from splen-

dour to dark vaults. Why, this was the secret of the abominable movies! They jerked an audience out of one tedious place into a dozen. He walked toward Fifth Avenue, thinking, roused because the streets seemed more speckled with olive cloth. Some transport had disgorged soldiers freshly into the city tired of gaping at them. Mark enjoyed their tan in the crowded pace of Fifth Avenue where women showed powder as moist paste on their cheeks in a warmth like that of May. A motion picture star detained him at a crossing and haughtily leaned from her red, low car demanding the rights of a play for her company. Mark couldn't follow the permutations of these women. She had been a chorus girl one met at suppers. Now she was superb in her vulgar furs with a handsome young Jew beside her and a wolfish dog chained on the flying seat. Mark got himself away and came home to the panelled library where Carlson was stretched under three quilts on his wheeled chair gossiping with an old comedian about the merits of Ada Rehan. Soon the elderly caller left. Mark took his chair by Carlson and wondered what he would do if his patron died before Gurdy got back. Carlson couldn't last much longer, the doctors said, but his mind was active. He yapped, "I've got a hunch, sonny."

"Go on."

"You're goin' to see Gurdy pretty dam' quick. I had a nap before Ferguson came in. Dreamed about the kid."

"He'd have cabled if he'd sailed," Mark said, "No, he's still stuck in the mud at Saint Nazaire. By God, it's enough to make a man vomit, reading about those damned embarkation camps! And he ain't an officer. They say the enlisted men don't even get enough to eat!" He suddenly fumed.

"Well, don't cry about it, you big calf," said Carlson, "Honest to God, I never saw a feller that can cry like you do! You cried like a hosepipe when the kid got shot—and from all I hear it wasn't nothin' but a scratch on his belly. And I used to spend hours trying to teach you to shed one tear when you was actin'! You was the punkest matiny idol ever drew breath of life!"

Mark chuckled, "I suppose I was," then a hand slid down over his shoulder and an olive cuff followed it. Mark's heart jumped. He dropped his head back against Gurdy's side and began to weep idiotically as he had sworn to himself that he wouldn't. Old Carlson surveyed the end of the trick delightedly. He privately cursed Gurdy for standing still and pale when it was clearly the right thing to make a fuss. The cub was too cool.

"Son, son," said Mark.

Gurdy hoped that the man would not repeat that illogical word in his husky, drumming voice. The repetition brought the illusion of joy too close. He chewed his lip and wriggled, gave in and stooped over Mark. He got out, "Here, I've not had any lunch, Mark," and that turned Mark into mad action, sent him racing downstairs to find the butler.

"Why the hell didn't you kiss him?" Carlson snarled.

"I'm twenty—"

"You're a hog," the old man meditated. His eyes twinkled. He sneered, "Well, wipe your eyes. Here's a handkerchief if you ain't got one." He relished the boy's blush, watched him blink and went on, "Now, don't tell Mark about all the women you ruined, neither. He prob'ly thinks you been a saint. And don't go spillin' any of this talk about goin' to work on your own like some of these whelps do. Mark's got a three thousand dollar car comin' for you and he's goin' to pay you a hundred a week to set in the office and look wise. And don't tell him you didn't win the war, too. He knows you did. Christ, it was bad enough when I'd got to listen to how Margot was runnin' the Red Cross in London! After you went off I come pretty near callin' up the express company and havin' myself shipped to Stockholm! The big calf! Chewin' the paint

off the walls every time he heard there'd been fightin'! Sentymental lunatic! Your papa and mamma 've got three times more sense about you. Get out of here. I got to make up sleep." He shut his eyes. Two tears ran and were lost in the sharp wrinkles of his face. Gurdy gulped and walked downstairs, abashed by the sheer weight of idolatry.

Mark was twisting the cork out of a champagne bottle in the dining room. At once he said, "They'll have some eggs up right away, sonny."

"My God but you're thin, Mark!"

"No exercise. Haven't had time to play golf. Now, we'd better get the car and run down to Fayettes—"

"I talked to mother from Camp Merritt. Be in Camp Dix tomorrow. I'll see them there. They can motor over. Only twelve miles. Heard from Margot lately?"

His uncle beamed saying, "Says she wants to come home, son. I've got to talk to you about that. What d'you think?"

Gurdy said quickly, "Let her come, Mark. The fact is, I think she's bored. You haven't seen her since last year? She's got a gang of men trailing after her and she isn't a flirt. Chelsea's full of bright young painters and things. They all come and camp on the doormat. Lady Ilden's

a sort of fairy godmother, of course." He lapsed into a sudden state of mind about Margot, fondling his glass of champagne. Untrimmed discourse on women had amused his first days in the army. But the weeks' return in the jammed transport had sickened him with the stuffy talk of prospective and retrospective desire. It had been musky, stifling. He wondered how women, if they guessed, would value that broad commentary. And how men lied about women! The precisian was annoyed to a snort and Mark filled his glass again, smiling.

Of course, having seen her, the boy wanted Margot home. Mark said, "She wrote me you'd turned out better looking than she thought. Knew she'd think so. And Olive was pleased to death with you, of course. How's your side feel?—My God, what are those fools doing to the eggs!"

He rushed into the pantry. Rank pleasure swelled in Gurdy. There was no use doing anything with the incurable, proud man who drove him back to Camp Merritt at dusk with two bottles of champagne hidden in his motor coat, invited confessions and beamed constantly.

"Only don't act like you'd ever kissed a woman in front of your mother, son. Country folks. Shock her to death. You any taller? I'll call up Sanford about some clothes for you. Good

night, sonny. You go straight to the farm when you're discharged. I'll be down Sunday."

An illusion of happiness beset Gurdy. He stood in the green street of the half empty camp staring after the motor, the wine bottles wrapped in paper under his arm. It was astonishing how foolish Mark was, to be sure. But wine or emotion warmed the chill air about Gurdy like the pour of a hot shower. If Mark wanted to be an ass over him, it couldn't be helped. He kept thinking of his foolish worshipper in the transfer to the sandy discomfort of Camp Dix. There the Bernamers appeared in a large motor with grandfather Walling furred and mittened in the back seat. The illusion of happiness deepened into a sensuous bath, although his mother had contracted more fat and his sisters were too brawny for real charm. Gurdy struggled for righteous detachment while his brothers candidly goggled their admiration and his father examined the purple scar that passed dramatically up Gurdy's milky skin. He found himself blinking and got drunk on the second bottle of champagne when his family left. But it seemed wiser to surrender to the flood of affectionate nonsense for a time. It was even convenient that Mark should send a tailor down to Fayettesville with clothes rapidly confected. On Sunday Mark arrived with a small car lettered G.B. in blue on its panel.

"Just the blue Gurdy's eyes are," Mrs. Bernamer drawled.

Gurdy understood that maternal feeling was a rather shocking symbol on the charts of analysts and that Mark probably doted on him for some trivial resemblance unconsciously held and engrossed. But it was pleasant, being a symbol. He drove Mark down into Trenton and talked of Margot while they drank bad American Benedictine in a seedy hotel.

"I don't know whether she's very clever or simply sensible," he said, achieving detachment by way of Benedictine. "Anyhow, most cleverness is just common sense—perception." His eyes darkened. Mark thought in lush comfort that Gurdy would marry the girl. Gurdy had friends among the right sort of people. Poor Carlson would die pretty soon. Gurdy and Margot would live at the house, which were best adorned freshly. The Benedictine gave out. They drove into the twisted lanes behind Trenton and Gurdy talked levelly of France. "Damned humiliating to get laid out by a hunk of zinc off a bathtub. Margot joshed me about it. . . . Paris was perfectly astonishing! American privates giving parties for British admirals and stealing their women.—I ran into a Y. M. C. A. girl who wanted to have Fontainebleau made into a reform school. Margot says she found one that wanted to have

George turn Windsor Castle into a hospital for the A. E. F. . . . You mustn't mind Margot swearing. All the flappers seem to.—Oh, I met Cora Boyle."

"How's she looking?"

"Handsome." Gurdy thought for a second and then inquired. "What did you—"

Mark comprehended the stop. He said, "She was the first woman ever took any notice of me.—Why, I suppose she was a kind of ideal. I mean, I liked that kind of looks. Lord knows what she married me for. Wonder, is that Rand kid still married to her? Is? I guess she's settled down in London for keeps. Well, I want you to look at the plans of the Walling, son. They've made me a model. Tell me if you see anything wrong."

He simmered with joy when Gurdy approved the whole plan except the shape of the boxes. The boy ran back and forth between Fayettesville and the city in his car, asked seemly young men to dine in Fifty Fifth Street, read plays and wandered with Mark to costumers. People stared at him in the restaurants where Mark took him to lunch. His tranquil height and his ease drew glances. His intolerant comments on the motley of opening nights made Mark choke. Sometimes, though, Mark found the boy's eyes turned on him with surprise.

"You seem to hang out in Greenwich village a lot, Mark."

"I kind of like it. Don't understand some of the talk. The show business is changing, sonny. It's changed a lot since nineteen fourteen. If you'd told me five years back that a piece like Redemption could have a run I'd have laughed my head off. Or that you could mount a play like Jones has fixed up this thing at the Plymouth—all low lights and—what d'you call it?—impressionist scenery. . . . The game's changed.—Oh, the big money makers'll always be hogwash, Gurdy! Don't bet any other way. I ain't such a fool as to think that Heaven's opened because you can put on a piece with a sad ending and some—well, philosophy to it and have it make a little cash. No such luck. Only it's got so now that when some big, fat wench in a lot of duds starts throwin' his pearls back at the man that's keepin' her in the third act—why, there's a lot of folks out front that say, Oh, hell, and go home. Of course, there's a lot more that think it's slick.—Lord, I'd like to put on 'Measure for Measure' when we open the Walling!—You could make that look like something.—I've got to find something *good* to open with. This kid Steve O'Mara's sending me up a play about a thug that gets wrecked down in Cuba and steals a plantation. Ten scenes to it, he says. One of 'em's a

lot of niggers havin' a Voodoo party. Sounds fine. I picked *him* up down in Greenwich village."

"I should think all those half married ladies and near anarchists would shock you to death."

"Bosh, brother. I don't like 'em enough to get shocked at 'em. What's there to get shocked at? They think so and so and I think the other way. If you took to preaching dynamite I'd be pretty worried—like I would if your mamma bobbed her hair and ran off with a tenor. I'm not an old maid just because I'm in the show business." He lit a cigarette and added. "Fifty per cent of theatrical managers are old maids."

"Just what do you mean?"

"Why, they are. This way. They get used to a run of plots and they can't see outside that. For instance, here's a dramatist—forgotten his name—was trying to sell a piece last year. I couldn't use it but I thought it was pretty good so I sent him over to Loeffler with a note. Next day, Loeffler called me up and said I ought to be hung for the sake of public morals. This play knocked round the offices and every one thought it was awful. Why? The hero's a chauffeur that's tired of working, so he marries a rich old woman. It's something that happens every other day in the papers. There ain't a week that some fifty year old actress doesn't marry a kid step dancer but they all carried on as if this

fellow'd written a play where every one came on the stage stark naked and danced the hoochy coochee. It wasn't a nice idea but where's it worse than nine tenths these bedroom things or as bad?"

"Why wouldn't you use it, Mark?"

"Oh, hell, there wasn't but one scene and that was an interior!"

Gurdy asked, "Mark, wouldn't you like it if the playwrights would go back to the Elizabethan idea—I mean thirty or forty scenes to a play?"

"Certainly," said Mark, "and those bucks were right." He sat for a little silent, scrawling his desk blotter wih a pencil, then shyly laughed, "Supposing some one made a play out of my married life? What you'd call the important episodes happened all over God's earth. Cora got me on a farm in Fayettesville, N. J., married in Hoboken. Started quarreling in Martin's café. Caught her kissing a fellow at Longbranch. Never saw him before or since. Owned up she'd lived with three or four men in our flat—twentieth Street, New York. Big scene. God, how sick that made me! I was at tea at Mrs. LeMoyne's when Frank Worthing got me off in a corner and told me about her and Jarvis Hope. I was sittin' in the bath tub when she chucked her curling irons at me and said she was through. That's the way things go. Shakespeare was right. Crazy? No.—Come in." His secretary brought

Mark a thick manuscript lettered "Captain Salvador: Stephen O'Mara." and withdrew. Mark went on, "But my married life wouldn't make much of a show—green kid from the country and a—a Cora Boyle. Pretty ordinary." He reflected, "But I don't know. It's always going to be pretty tragic for a kid to find out he's married a girl thinkin' she was pure—as pure as folks are, anyhow—and finds she hadn't been. Wasn't her fault, of course. Started acting when she was fourteen. Awful jolt, though. She lied about it, too. She was the damnedest liar! I hate liars. Well run along and play squash or something, sonny. I want to see what O'Mara's handed me."

He bought the rights to "Captain Salvador" two hours later. Gurdy was willing to rejoice with him after he read the Cuban tragedy. Carlson yapped, "The women'll hate it, Mark. Where's your clothes?"

"Bosh," said Mark, "there weren't any women's clothes in Ervine's 'John Ferguson' and the women ate it alive!"

"But that fellow Ervine's an Englishman, you big calf! You ain't going to open the Walling with a sad piece by an American where there ain't any duds for the women to gawp at! You're off your head. Ain't I told you a million times that the New York woman won't swallow a home

grown show that's tragic unless it's all dressed up? Stop him, Gurdy!"

"It's a damned good play, sir," said Gurdy.

He thought it high fortune that Mark should find anything so adroit and moving for the Walling's first play. Some of the critics believed in O'Mara's talent. Several artists in scenery were asked to submit designs. The pressmen began a scattering campaign of notes on O'Mara and hints about the play. A procession of comely young women declined the best female part as "unsympathetic."

"That means no clothes to it," Carlson sniffed.

"But they're fools," Gurdy insisted, "It's a good acting part."

"My God," the old man screamed, "don't you know that no woman wants a part where she can't show her shape off and wear pearls! And these hens that got looks don't have to act any more. They go to California and get in the movies. You talk like actresses were human beings! Women don't act unless they ain't good lookin' or've got brains. You'll have to go a long ways if you want a good lookin' wench for that part. God, you keep talkin' like actin' was some kind of an art! It ain't. It's a game for grown up kids that they get paid for. An actor that's got any brains never gets to be more'n some one smart in comedy. A tragedian's nothin' but a hunk of

mush inside his head. Catch a girl that'll act tragical when she can sit on a sofa in a Paris gown and have some goop make eyes at her!—And Mark'll have a fine time at rehearsals makin' any leadin' man wear a stubble beard and eat with his knife, like in this play. Art!" and the old man fell asleep snorting. Yet his bedroom behind the panelled library was dotted with photographs of dead actors and actresses. Sometimes his dry voice trailed into a sort of tenderness when he spoke of James Lewis or Augustin Daly.

"Softhearted as an egg," said Mark, hesitated and resumed, "He's got fifty thousand apiece for you and Margot in his will, sonny. Rest of it goes to his sister's children in Sweden. —What's this you were saying about running out to Chicago?"

"I'd rather like to. Lacy Martin—remember him? I roomed with him freshman year at college—Lacy lost his leg in France. He's rather blue. His mother wrote me that she'd like me to come out. I thought I would."

"Well.—I thought I'd surprise you with it. Got a cable from Olive Ilden Thursday. Margot sailed Friday. Ought to land day after tomorrow." He saw the orange level of Gurdy's cocktail flicker. Then the boy set it down and brooded. Mark made his face stolid to watch this. The butler served fish and retired without

noise to his pantry. The tapestry of Chinese flowers behind Gurdy's chair stirred in the May wind. The boy was immobile, fair and trim in his chair. He seemed strangely handsome—a long, easy lounging gentleman who hated sharp emotions.

"Really think I'd better go out to Lake Forest, Mark. I more or less promised I would. I shan't be gone more than a—couple of weeks."

Triumph dragged a chuckle from Mark. He covered it with, "Oh, sure! If Lacy's got the blues, run ahead out and cheer him up." The boy was in full flight from love, of course, and didn't want to admit it. Mark doted on him, drawled, "Got all the money you'll need?" and was pleased by Gurdy's confession that he needed a good deal. He gave the boy errands about Chicago to aid the retreat. "There's a girl named Marryatt playing at the La Salle. Some of them think she's got distinction. And poke around and see if you can rake up a scenery man. Take the directions for Captain Salvador along. If you find any one that ain't just copying Bobby Jones or Gordon Craig make him send me sketches. And there's this poet on a newspaper —he's named something like Sandwich—no, Sanbridge. See if he's got a play up his sleeve. O'Mara was talking about him."

He saw Gurdy off for Chicago, the next noon,

then set about making lists of successive luncheons for Margot. This return must be an ample revenge for her waygoing. She wasn't, now, the small girl whose presence in Miss Thorne's school had frightened matrons. She was some one protected by his celebrity and trained by Olive Ilden. He must contrive her content until she married Gurdy. She was democratic—Olive had seen to that. Mark had watched her chaff a knot of convalescent soldiers in Hyde Park. She wouldn't care that one of his best friends had risen toward management from the rank of a burlesque dancer, that another had been an undertaker in Ohio. She wouldn't mind things like that. He marshalled the cleverest of the critics and the young women who dealt in publicity. Gurdy would bring proper men to call, when he came back from his flight. The expanse of her future opened like an unfurling robe of exquisite colours. She strolled in Mark's mind most visibly. He hummed, inspecting his house.

"Yes," Carlson sneered, "she's been footloose amongst a pack of dukes and things and you think she's going to like bein' mixed up with a lot of—"

"She won't mind," said Mark.

She seemed to mind nothing. She landed on the twentieth of that cool May, kissed Mark on the nose and told him she had three cases of champagne in the hold. The customs inspec-

tors were dazzled stumbling among her trunks. A file of other voyagers came to shake hands. A great hostess kissed the girl, smiled at Mark and said gently that she hoped Mr. Walling would bring Margot to luncheon next fall.

"She's quite nice," Margot assured him in the motor, "She probably kept your photograph with a bunch of violets in a jar in front of it when you were a matinée—Oh, how you hate that word! How nice your nose is! Where on earth's Gurdy?—Lake Forest? Oh, that's where all the Chicago pig kings live, isn't it? They have chateaux and moats and exclude—But it's rather rotten he isn't here. I've a couple of awful French novels for him. He speaks such rather remarkable French. I can't make the right J sounds. He's such a stately animal. I was awfully frightened of him in London. Such a ghastly crossing!"

"Why, honey?"

She stared at him with wide black eyes and said more slowly, "How nicely you say things like that. —You're really awfully glad I'm back, aren't you?"

Mark choked, "Here's Times Square."

She shrugged and leaned back on the blue cushions. "Horrible! But the theatre district in London's worse, really. The Walling'll be on a side street, won't it? I'd loathe seeing Walling

in electric bulbs along here. Be rather as though you were running about naked. Did I write you about Ronny Dufford's new play? Been a most tremendous success. You should bring it over. That's the Astor, isn't it? What colour's the Walling to be inside? Blue? Rather dark blue? And swear to me that you won't have Russian decorations!"

"I swear, daughter."

"You old saint," said Margot, "and you're still the best looking man in the known world!"

Her lips had a curious, untinted brilliance as though the blood might burst from them. Dizzy Mark told himself that she wasn't the most beautiful of women. Her brown face was like his face and her father's face, too flat. Her hands weren't small, either, but she wore no rings. Her gown was dark and her tam o'shanter of black velvet was inseparable from her hair in the mist of his eyes. Silver buckles swayed and twinkled when her gleaming feet moved about his house and she smiled in a veil of cigarette smoke.

"You've simply natural good taste, dad. Born, not made. Don't think I'm keen on that Venice glass in the dining room. Too heavy. Where does Gurdy sleep?—I snore, you know?"

"I don't believe it. He sleeps on the top floor where the old playroom was."

She threw her head back to laugh and said,

"Where he used to make such sickening noises on the piano when he thought you were petting me too much? He's a dear. It wouldn't be eugenics for me to marry him, would it?"

"See that, Mark?" Carlson squealed, "She ain't been ten minutes in the country and she's huntin' a husband? That's gratitude!"

"Oh, you," said Margot, spinning on a heel, "If you were ninety seven years younger I'd marry you myself."

She teased the old man relentlessly. She teased Mark before his guests at the first luncheon. Her variations appalled the man. She seemed to know all the printable gossip of New York. She spoke to older women with a charming patience, played absurd English songs to amuse Mark's pet critic and got the smallest of the managers in a loud good temper by agreeing with his debatable views on stage lighting. Most of these, his friends, had forgotten that she was Mark's niece. Their compliments were made as on a daughter. He felt the swift spread of a ripple; editors of fashion monthlies telephoned to ask for photographs; the chief of a Sunday supplement wanted her views on the American Red Cross; a portrait painter came calling.

"Silly ass," said Margot, "I met him in Devonshire. I hate being painted. You've never had a portrait done? Dreary. One has to sit and

smirk." She went fluttering a yellow frock up the library to find an ash tray, came back smoking a cigarette, neared Mark's chair then veered off to pat Carlson's jaw.

"You used to set like a kitchen stove in one spot for an hour at a time," Carlson said, "Now you're all over the place."

"One has to move about in England to keep warm. Dad, I wrote Ronny Dufford to send you a copy of his play. Ronny's land poor, you know? It's made mountains of money but I don't think he's half out of debt, yet. Such a nice idiot. He liked Gurdy such a lot. What the deuce an' all is Gurdy doing in Chicago? Bargin' about with the pigstickers?"

She shed her mixture of slangs when his broker's wife came to luncheon. Mark didn't think it affected that she mainly talked of titled folk to the smart, reticent woman. Mrs. Villay invited her to Southampton before leaving. Margot shook her hair free of two silver combs and shrugged as the front door shut. "I suspect her of being a ferocious snob. Sweet enough, though. Fancy she doesn't read anything but Benson and the late Mrs. Ward.—Oh, no, Mrs. Ward isn't late, is she? Simply lamented."

Mark laughed, "Let's go talk to Mr. Carlson."

"You always call him Mister. Just why, darling?"

"Well, he's forty years older than me, sister. And he made me. He—"

"Tosh! You made yourself! Let's walk over and see how the Walling's getting on."

He wallowed in this warm enchantment for ten days. Margot dismissed herself to Fayettesville on the first breath of heat. He went down to see her established in the gaping adoration of the family. He thought it hard on the Bernamer girls. He had hinted boarding school for these virgins but the Bernamers, trained by moving pictures, were wary. Yet Margot was clearly born to captivate women. He wrote to Gurdy at Lake Forest: "It was nice to see her tone herself down for your grandfather and your mother. I told her she had better not smoke except with your dad in the cowbarn. You kept telling me I must not be shocked. What is there to get shocked at? Young girls are not as prissy as they were when I was a pup.—Hell of a row coming on with the actors. We are trying to keep things quiet but it looks like a strike. But some of the men still think an actor is a cross between a mule and a hog. Letter from Olive Ilden says she is going to Japan pretty soon and will come this way. I see in the London news that Cora Boyle has signed up with the Celebrities and is coming over to be filmed as Camille or The Queen of Sheba. You are wrong about 'Heartbreak

House.' It is a conversation, not a play. I wish Shaw would do something like Cæsar and Cleopatra again. They start work on the sets for Captain Salvador next week at the studio. Shall have two sets made for the Voodoo scene and try both on the road before we open the Walling."

Gurdy reflected that it was time to come home. Then he put it off. Lake Forest was pleasant. He was fond of his host. It was prudent to test the pull of this feeling for Margot. The thing augmented now that he couldn't talk of her. A strict detachment from passion was silly, after all. But he was annoyed with himself as the passage of any tall and blackhaired woman across a lawn would interrupt the motion of his blood. He set his brain tasks, meditated the girl at Fayettesville, hoped that she wouldn't singe the acute American skin of his young brothers by comments on the national arms. His sisters had probably made their own experiments with cigarettes. They were sensible lasses, anyhow, if given to endless gush about moving pictures. His young host's sisters, amiable, blond girls were much the same thing rarified by trips to Europe, suave frocks and some weak topics in the cerebral change. They held Dunsany a fascinating dramatist and thought there was something to be said for communism. Chicago puzzled him with its summer negligence and the candour of its wealth,

with the air of stressed vice in the Loop restaurants and the sudden change from metropolis to a country town within the city limits. It seemed absurd that the listless, polished wife of a hundred million dollars should return from Long Island to give a dance in honor of a travelling English poet held lowly in Chelsea, described by Olive Ilden as a derivative angleworm. At this dance he heard of Margot from an unknown woman with whom he waltzed.

"I saw you in London, last winter."

"I was there. Funny I don't remember—"

"You were in uniform with Margot Walling and Lady Ilden. At a play. Margot was wearing one of her yellow frocks. I was the other side of the gangway. I wondered about you, rather. Margot always snubs me. I'm a countess of sorts and it always interests me when Americans snub me.—Lets's get something to drink. I don't dance well and you must be in torments—What's your name?"

She was a lank, tired creature in a rowdy gown sewn with false pearls that hissed theatrically as she slumped into a chair on the lit terrace.

"Cousin, eh?—Well, Margot amuses me. She's the genuine aristocrat, you know? Take what you want and to hell with the rest. Pity so few Americans catch the idea. Imagine any continental woman coming a thousand miles to give a

dance for a cheapjack penny poet like this sweep. Afraid he won't mention her in his travel book, I dare say. Run and get me a drink. Something mild." A youth at the buffet told him this was the Countess of Flint. She sipped wine cup, refused a cigarette and asked, "Where did you go to school? Saint Andrew's? My brothers did Groton. Beautiful training wasted on the desert air. That's the trouble with the American game. Did you ever think how much good it would have done the beastly country to have had about four generations of a hard and fast aristocracy—plenty of money, no morals, quantities of manner? It's simply a waste of time and money to train lads and then turn them loose in a herd of rich women all afraid of their dressmakers. What a zero the average American woman is!"

"Hush," he said, "That's treason! You'll be shot at sunrise!"

"Unsalted porridge. Utter vacuum. Not a vacuum either because she's a bully, usually. And a prude.— Is Margot going to marry Ronny Dufford?"

Gurdy jumped, inescapably startled. He said, "Colonel Dufford? The General Staff man who writes plays? I'm sure I don't know."

"It wouldn't be a bad thing. Ronny's all right —the gentleman Bohemian touch and I dare say she has money." The lank woman coughed,

went on, "She'll take on an Englishman in any case, though."

"She's in New York."

"Oh, she'll get fed with that directly and trot home." The woman locked her gaunt arms behind her careless hair and yawned at the amber moon above the clipped pines. "New York's frightful! Stuffed middle westerners squatting in hotels trying to look smart. Place is absolutely run by women. Getting more respectable every time I go through. Haven't had any patience with New York since the Stanford White murder. Imagine all the bloods running to cover and swearing they'd never even met White because he'd been shot in a mess about a woman! Imagine it! I always bought Harding Davis's books after that because he had the sand to get up and say he liked White, in print. But that's Egyptian history." She began to cough fearfully. The pearls clattered on her gown.

"You've taken cold."

"No. Cigarettes. Are you married?"

"Good lord, no. Only been twenty-one a couple of weeks."

"How odd that must be! Twenty-one a couple of weeks ago. And you went to France and got shot. Singular child!"

"Why singular?"

"Oh, I've been amusing myself at Saranac—at

a house party, with a social register and an army list. A war where eighty per cent. of the educated men—I mean the smart universities—the bloods under thirty all went and hid themselves. It's not pretty."

"Aren't you exag—"

"Not in the least. I had fifty American officers convalescing at my husband's place in Kent and half of them were freight clerks from Iowa. What can you expect when the American woman brings her son up to be a coward and his father makes him a thief? And naturally the women despise the men. Who on earth wants an American husband?"

"They seem to find wives, somehow."

She coughed, rising, "Oh, travel's expensive." Then she gestured to the orange oblongs of the ballroom windows. "D'you think any one of those women would hesitate a minute between being the next lady of the White House or the mistress of the Prince of Wales? Of course not! Give Margot my love. Good-bye. Too chilly out here." She rattled away.

Gurdy dropped into the chair and stared after her. He should tabulate this woman at once with her romantic illusions of aristocracy and patriotism. Margot supervened and seemed to move across the moony stones of the terrace. He thought frantically of Colonel Dufford. He

thought solidly of marriage for ten minutes. Beyond doubt he was in love with Margot. He stirred in the chair, repeating maxims. Passion wasn't durable. He might tire of her. He argued against emotion and blinked at the gold lamps on the bastard French face of this house. He was too young to select sensibly, didn't want to be sensible, suddenly. His pulse rose. He marvelled at love. In the morning he announced his present departure. At noon he had a special delivery letter from his youngest brother, Edward Bernamer, Junior, a placid boy of thirteen interested in stamp collecting. The scrawl was the worse for that complacency.

"Dear Gurd, For the love of Mike come on home and help take care of Margot E. Walling. She has got mamma and the girls all up in the air. Grandfather is getting ready to shoot her. I heard him talking to dad about writing Uncle Mark to take her away. I sort of like her. Eggs and Jim think she is hell."

Gurdy came whirling east to New York and found Mark at the 45th Street Theatre, humming over the model for a scene of "Captain Salvador." But plainly Mark knew nothing of any fissure in the sacred group at Fayettesville. He was busy rehearsing a comedy, had been to the farm only once. In any event Mark mustn't be hurt. Gurdy took breath and delicately put

forth, "I want you to do something damned extravagant, Mark."

"Easy, sonny. Just got the estimate for the mirrors at the Walling. Not more than ten thousand, please!"

"Not as bad as that. Get a cottage on Long Island for July and August. The farm's all right for Margot for a while. But grandfather goes to bed at nine. The kids play rags on the phonograph all afternoon. It gets tiresome after a while. I—"

"Oh, son," said Mark, "I'm not so thickheaded I can't see that sister'll get bored down there." He beamed, thinking Gurdy superb in grey tweeds, his white skin overlayed with pale tan. "No, I expect I'd get bored with the cows and chickens if I was there enough.—And we ought to have some kind of a country place of our own. —There's some friend of Arthur Hopkins has a place on Long Island he wants to let.—Olive Ilden'll be here in July and we ought to have a cottage somewhere. I don't think your dad and Olive'd have much to talk over." Mark grinned. Gurdy laughed, curling on a corner of the desk, approving the man's common shrewdness. Mark patted his palms together. "Look, you pike on down to the farm. Margot's got your car there. You fetch her up in the morning and you two go look at this cottage. I'll 'phone Hopkins and

find where it is. Oh, here's this piece Margot's friend Dufford's sent over. I hear it's doing a fair business in London but nothing to brag of. Read it and see what you think. Get going, son. You can catch the three o'clock for Trenton."

Gurdy strove with this fragility in neat prose all the way to Trenton. It had to do with a climber domiciled by mistake in the house of a stodgy young Earl. It was wordy and tedious. The name, "Todgers Intrudes," made him grunt. He laughed occasionally at the tinkling echoes of Wilde and Maugham. It might be passable in London where the lethal jokes on "Dora" and "Brass Hats" would be understood. He diligently tried to be just to Colonel Dufford's art which served to keep his pulse down and his mind remote from the approaching discomfort. Margot wasn't perfect. She had upset the family. It was best to get her quickly away from Fayettesville. He hired a battered car at Trenton. The Fayettesville Military Academy was closing for the summer, by all signs. Lads bustled toward the station towing parents and gaudy sisters in the beginning of sunset. He overtook his three brothers idling home toward the farm and gave them a lift. No one spoke of Margot directly. Edward, his correspondent, smiled sideways at Gurdy and drawled, "Must have been having a damn good time in Chicago, Gurd," but nothing

else was said. The car panted into the stone walled dooryard. His grandfather waved a linen clad arm at Gurdy from the padded chair on the veranda. His sisters accepted the usual candy and hid a motion picture magazine from him, giggling. Mrs. Bernamer was at a funeral in Trenton. Gurdy found Bernamer in the dairy yard studying a calf. It was always easy to be frank with the saturnine, long farmer. His father didn't suffer from illusions. They sat on the frame of the water tower and lit cigarettes, before speech.

"How's Margot been behaving, dad?"

"You sweet on her, son?"

"I like her. How's she been acting?"

Bernamer pulled his belt tight and lifted his hard face toward the sky. Gurdy felt the mute courtesy of his pause. The man had a natural scorn of tumult. He lived silently and, perhaps, thought much. He said, "This is just as much Mark's place as it is ours. He's the best feller livin'. We all know that. And she's Joe's daughter." Something boiled up in his blue eyes. He cried, "What in hell! You're as good as she is, ain't you? You can come home and act like we wasn't mud underfoot! Who the hell's she?" His wrath slid into laughter. He pulled his belt tighter and winked at Gurdy. "It's kind of funny hearin' her cuss, though."

"She over does that, a little. Just what's the trouble, dad?"

"I can't tell you, son. She's sand in the cream. It ain't her smokin'. I miss my guess if the girls ain't tried that.—She kind of puts me in mind of that Boyle wench Mark married. She's got the old man all worried. Your mamma's scared to death of her. So's the girls.—She ain't so damned polite it hurts her any. . . . Say, I wouldn't hurt Mark's feelings for the world—And I notice she don't carry on so high and mighty when Mark's here, neither.—Ain't there some place else she could go?"

Gurdy had a second of futile rage that divided itself between Margot and his family. This wasn't within remedy. She had absorbed the attitudes, the impatience of worlds exterior to the flat peace of the farm. He grinned at his father.

"Yes. I'm going to take her off. Mark's got more sense than you think, dad."

"Sure. Mark's got plenty of sense when he ain't dead cracked over a thing. Don't tell him I've been squalling. Mebbe that Englishwoman spoiled her, lettin' her gallivant too much. Mebbe it's her father comin' out in her. Between us, Joe was tougher'n most boys. You'll likely find her down in the orchard smokin' her head off. It's all kind of funny . . . and then it ain't."

She wasn't smoking. She sat with a novel spread on her yellow lap and the bole of an apple tree behind her head. There was a shattered plate of ruddy glow about her. The pose had the prettiness of a drowsy child. She was, her lover thought, a bragging child, lonesome for cleverness, annoyed by stolidity. In the vast green of the orchard she seemed small. He whistled. She rose, her hair for a moment floating, then laughed and threw the book away.

"Thank God, that's you! I thought it was one of—O, any one!"

There was a shrill, unknown jerk in her voice. She came running and took his arm.

"Tell me something about civilization—quick! You don't want to talk about the fil-lums do you? Or whether Jane Rupp's going to marry that Coe feller or—"

"Bored?"

"Oh—to death! How do you stand it? How do you stand it? . . . I knew they'd be common but I didn't think they'd be such bloody—"

"Look out," said Gurdy.

But the girl's red lips had retracted. She was shivering. She had lost her charm of posture. She cried, "Oh, yes! They're our people and all the rest of that tosh! I'm not a hypocrite. It's a stable! A stable!" Her breath choked her.

She gasped, "Get me out of here! I'm used to what you call real people!"

She loosed his sleeve and patted her hair. But some inner spring shook her. Scarlet streaks appeared in her face. She babbled, "He must be mad! Of course he's sentimental about them—about the place—the old place—It's the way he is about Carlson! My God, why should he think I can stand it!"

Something hummed in Gurdy's head. His hands heated. He stood shuffling a foot in the grass and looked from her at the green intricate branches. He must keep cool. He whispered, "Can't you find anything—well, funny in it?"

"It's all funny rather the way an old dress is! —Why should he think I could stay here? Three weeks! Of course, he hasn't any breed—"

"Shut up," said Gurdy, "That'll be all! We were born here. Mark took us and had us dressed and looked after—trained. I'm not going to laugh at them. I can't.—I'll be damned if I'll hear you laugh at Mark. Yes, he's sentimental! If he wasn't, d'you think he'd have bothered about taking care of you—of us? The family's sacred to him. He loves them. He's that kind.—Stop laughing!"

He hated her. There was no beauty left. Her face had shrivelled in this fire. She was swiftly and horribly like an angry trull. She said,

"Sentimentalist! You're a damned milk and sugar sentimentalist like—"

"Ah," said Gurdy, "that's out of some book! . . . All right. Mark's going to take a place on Long Island. We'll go up in the morning."

He tramped off. The orchard became a whirl of green flame that seared then left him cold. He was tired. His body felt like stone, heavy and dead. The illusion of desire was gone out of Gurdy.

VII

Todgers Intrudes

OLIVE ILDEN was detained and surrendered her mid July sailing. Her brother died. This did not grieve her; they had been on strained terms. But she was unwilling to offend his daughters. Offence had grown hateful with years. The personal matter flung to and fro among critics wearied her. It wasn't amusing to hear that an elderly novelist was "a doddering relic of the Victorian era." She envisaged the man's pain. Thus, she bore the formalities of her brother's passing and so missed three liners. About her, London recaptured something of its tireless motion. She wished for Margot and the youth Margot had kept parading through the quiet house. She hoped that the girl's frankness never shocked Mark and puzzled again over the rise of that frankness. In her first two English years the child had been sedate, almost solemn, reading a great deal and talking primly. Then her conversation had risen to a rattle. It must be rattling mightily in New York which Olive still fancied a place of cheerful freedom. Letters re-

corded the change from Fayettesville to a cottage on the Long Island shore: "Cottage was frightful but dad behaved quite as if he was mounting a play in a hurry. We drove from shop to shop and all the stuff came roaring along in motor trucks. I went to Southampton and camped with a rather nice woman, Mrs. Corliss Stannard, who picked me up coming across. It was dull as Westminster Abbey as every one kept cursing the Prohibition amendment. But dad had the cottage—(fourteen rooms and four baths)—all decorated by the time I got back. Some decentish friends of Gurdy live near here. The men are all Goths and the women are fearfully stiff but a broker proposed last night at a dance and I felt rather silly, as he has just been divorced two days and I hardly knew his name. But dad has bought an option to 'Todgers Intrudes.'" Then, "Dad very busy in town. The actors are threatening a strike. Gurdy pretends that he does not like 'Todgers Intrudes.' For a man who did a smart school and who knows his way about Gurdy is rather heavy. Rather decent lunch today. Dad brought down one of the other managers who talks through his nose and is a duck. He taught me how to do a soft shoe step." And later, "Dad very émotionné about a tragedy he is putting on in the autumn. It is rather thrilling. He means to open The Walling with it. Gurdy does not fancy 'Tod-

gers Intrudes.' He thinks himself a Bolshevik or something and I dare say the county family business in it annoys him."

Immediately after this, while the letter was fresh in mind Olive met Ronald Dufford on Regent Street. He took her congratulations on the American sale of his play with a dubious air, swung his stick and said, "Thanks. Fancy Margot made her guv'nor take it on. Between ourselves it hasn't more than just paid. You're going to the States, aren't you?"

"Next week. Yes, I think Margot had her father buy the play, Ronny. It's my sad duty to warn him that it hasn't been what the Yankees call a three bagger—whatever that means."

The playwright grinned amiably, saying, "Rather wish you would. My things haven't done well in the States. I'm not so keen on being known as a blight, out there. Walling's paid me two hundred pounds, no less, for American rights. Charitable lad he must be!—I say, I hear that Cossy Rand's gone over to play for him."

"Who's Cossy Rand?"

"Cora Boyle's little husband. Nice thing. You've met him? He rehearsed us for that thing of mine at Christmas. A thin beggar with—"

"Of course. I've even danced with him but he passed out of the other eye."

"But isn't it rather odd for Walling to take on his ex-wife's present husband? Bit unusual? You've always told me that Walling's a conservative sort."

"Why shouldn't Walling take him on, Ronny? The man's rather good, isn't he?"

"Fairish. Frightfully stiff. He played the Earl in 'Todgers' while Ealy was fluing.—What I meant was that it seems odd Walling should cable him to come over. But I'll be awfully bucked if old 'Todgers' gets along in the States. 'Tisn't Shaw, you know?"

Olive was lightly vexed with Margot. The girl was irresponsible when she wanted something for a friend. But the trait was commendable; Olive still ranked personal loyalty higher than most static virtues. But "Todgers Intrudes" was a dreary business. She spoke of it to Mark when he met her at the New York pier. The idolator chuckled.

"The actors have struck. I hope Margot'll forget about the thing before the strike's over. She likes Dufford? Well, that's all the excuse she needed. She isn't—"

"Are you letting her stamp on your face, old man?"

"It don't hurt. She don't weigh a heap. She says Dufford's poor."

His eyes were dancing. He wore a yellow flower in his coat and patted Olive's arm as he steered her to the lustrous blue car. "We'll go up to my house for lunch. Mr. Carlson's crazy to see you. Mustn't mind if he curses at you. We'll go on down to the shore after lunch. Where's Sir John, m'lady?"

"Malta. Shall I see Gurdy? The nicest child!"

"Ain't he? I've got him reading plays." Mark soared into eulogies, came down to state, "This is Broadway," as the car plunged over the tracks between two drays.

"If that's Broadway," Olive considered, "I quite understand why half of New York lives in Paris. I do want to see Fifth Avenue. The skyscrapers disappointed me but Arnold Bennett says Fifth Avenue's really dynamic." A moment after when the car faced the greasy slope of asphalt she said, "Bennett's mad."

Mark sighed, "It's an ugly town. But this street's nice at sunset, in winter. It turns a kind of purple. . . . It was bully when the women wore violets. They don't wear real flowers any more. —You used to smell violets everywhere. Violets and furs and cigar smoke. I used to like it." His eyes sparkled on the revocation. He smiled

at the foul asphalt and the drooping flags of shops where the windows gave out a torturing gleam.

"You great boy," said Olive.

"Boy? Be forty-one the second of November. —Oh, awful sorry about your brother, Olive."

"I'm not. Gerald was null and void. I never even discovered where he found the energy to marry and beget daughters. Margot's lived more at the age of eighteen than Gerald had at fifty. I don't suppose that you can understand how I can slang my own family."

"Oh, sure. Because my folks are all nice it don't follow I think every one ought to be crazy about theirs. Did he have a son?"

"No. The land goes to our cousin—Shelmardine of Potterhanworth—that idiot his wife pushed into Peerage. She was one of the managing Colthursts. Loathsome woman. Her son's a V.C. though.—Oh, this improves!" The car passed Forty Fifth Street. Olive gazed ahead, cheered by the statelier tone of the white avenue. Mark wondered how a woman who had lost both children could yet smile at the dignity of Saint Patrick's and again at the homesick bewilderment of her maid getting down before his house.

Old Carlson bobbed his head to this lady, abandoning his ancient fancy that she had been Mark's mistress. He studied her grey hair and the worn,

sharp line of her face. Then he cackled that she was to blame for turning Margot into a "sassy turnip."

"My dealings with turnips have always been conducted through a cook. Has she been shocking you?"

"Ma'am," said Carlson, "You can't shock me. I was in the show business from eighteen sixty-nine to nineteen fourteen. I lugged a spear in the 'Black Crook' and I was a gladyator when the Police arrested McCullough for playin' Spartacus in his bare legs. No, Margot can't shock me any more'n a kitten." He rolled a cigarette shakily, spilling tobacco on his cerise quilt. Olive held a match for him. He coughed, "But you'd ought of seen her ballyrag Mark into buyin' this English piece—What the hell do you call it, Mark?"

"Todgers Intrudes."

"That's a name for you! Gurdy don't like it. I say it's hogwash. Maggie, she set on a table smokin' her cheroot and just made the big calf buy it. . . . She did, Mark. So don't stand there lookin' like Charlie Thorne in 'Camille'!"

Mark was stirring with laughter at the old man's venom. He said, "I told Olive Margot made me buy it."

"Oh," Olive said, "if you let Margot run your affairs you'll have strange creatures from darkest Chelsea mounting all your plays and flappers

who've acted twice in a charity show playing Monna Vanna. She made my poor husband buy a cubist portrait of Winston Churchill some pal of hers painted. When he found it was meant to be Churchill he took to his bed."

"Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Williams," said the butler against Mark's swift, "Ask 'em to go to the drawing room. 'Xcuse me, Olive. Got to go talk strike a minute."

She looked about the sinless library with its severe panels and blue rug then at Mark's patron —an exhumed Pharaoh, his yellow hawk face and bloodless hands motionless, the cigarette smoking in a corner of his mouth. He had just the pathos of oncoming death. He squeaked, "Mark's busy as a pup with fleas. Actors strikin'! The lazy hounds! It's enough to make Gus Daly turn in his grave!"

"You've no sympathy with them?"

"Not a speck! The show business is war and war's hell. Here's this Boyle onion Mark was married to, Bill Loeffler sends for her to come back from England and get a thousand a week to play in a French piece. Pays her passage. Then what? Minute she sets foot on land she grabs a movie contract and pikes off to California. She's a hot baby, she is! Actors!"

"I hear that Mark's engaged her husband."

"That slimjim sissy from Ioway? Not much!"

"Is Rand an American?"

"He-ell, yes! He's old Quincy Rand's son that used to run the Opera House in Des Moines. He run off with a stock comp'ny that played Montreal and got to talkin' English. I told Margot that and she was mad enough to bust.—Say, you British are cracked, lettin' a pack of actors loose in your houses like they was human—" He fell asleep. The nurse came to take the cigarette from his lips. Olive strolled off to examine the shelves packed tightly with books. Here was the medley of Mark's brain—volumes of Whyte Melville mingled with unknown American novels, folios on decoration, collected prints from the European galleries. A copy of "Capital" surprised her but she found Gurdy's signature dated, "Yale College, November, 1916," on the first page. Gurdy came up the white stairway and saw the black gown with relief. Lady Ilden could be a buffer between Margot and himself. There would be less need of visits to the seashore house. He led the Englishwoman into the broad hall.

"Something odd has just happened, Gurdy."

"Mr. Carlson swear at you?"

"Before, not at. But he tells me that Mark did not send for Cosmo Rand to act in something over here whereas Ronny Dufford most distinctly told me that Mark did. It interested me because

Mark's so coy about his old wife and it seemed queer that he'd cable for her husband."

"I expect Rand's lying a little, for advertisement. No, Mark didn't send for him. He never engages people to come from England. Has Rand come over? According to Margot he's such an idol in London that it'd take an act of Parliament to get him away. Miss Boyle's here. We saw her at lunch in the Algonquin and she patronized Mark for a minute. Didn't Rand play some part in this 'Todgers Intrudes' piffle in London?"

"Which reminds me," said Olive, "Margot made Mark take that? Is she making him cover her with emeralds and give masked balls?"

Gurdy said honestly, "No, not at all. We've had some house parties—some friends of mine and some of the reviewers and so on. She seems to be amusing herself."

"And she hasn't shocked Mark?"

"Why should she?" Gurdy laughed, leaning on the white handrail, "she doesn't do any of the things he dislikes seeing women do. She doesn't drink anything, for instance, and she doesn't paint. When did she go in for pacifism—not that I've any objection to it."

"That was a way of helping me out when my boy fell, I think. She raged about the war as a sort of outlet for me. Really, she enjoyed the

war tremendously. As most girls did. Is she still raving about the slaughter of the artist?"

"The slaughter of actors. Some Englishman —an actor—said that too many actors slacked and she lit on him. He mentioned half a dozen—can't remember them.—You told me in London that she wanted to act?"

"Yes. Has she been teasing Mark—"

"No. But I think she could."

"My dear boy, I've seen her in amateur things twice and she was appalling! Vivacity isn't ability. Of course she has a full equipment in the way of looks.—You mustn't get dazzled over Margot, Gurdy." His face was blank. Olive chanced a probe. "I forbid you to fall in love with her, either. You're cousins and it's not healthy."

"I'm not thinking of it," said Gurdy, red, and so convinced Olive that he was deep in love. But the dying blush left him grave. He stood listening to the slow drawl of Mark's voice below them and wondering what tone would overtake its husky music if Margot should turn on the worshipper, screaming and hateful. He wondered at himself, too. His passion had blown out. It had no ash, no regret. He was free of anger, even, and he had done the girl mental justice. He didn't want her back.

"You look rather done up, old man."

"War nerves. We've all got them. And I'm reading plays and some of them make me howl. Such awful junk! 'Don't, don't look at me like that. I'm a good woman, and you have taken from me the only thing I had to love in the whole world.' That sort of stuff. And the plays for reform are as bad as the ones against it. I don't know why people always lose their sense of humour when they start talking economics!"

"Old man, when you've lived to be forty you'll find out that only one person in a thousand can resist a sentimentalism on their side of the question. And it's almost always a sentimentalist who writes plays on economics. But you do look seedy. Are you coming to the country with us after luncheon?"

"No."

But he drove with Mark and Olive to the half finished front of The Walling in West 47th Street. Mark pointed out the design of Doric columns and bare tablets. Olive guessed at a simple richness and stared after Mark when he walked through groups of hot, noisy workmen into the shadow of his own creation. His black height disappeared among the girders and the dust of lime.

"Did it all himself," said Gurdy. "The architects just followed what he wanted done.—You called him a kid with a box of paints. You

should see him fuss over a stage setting!—D'you know—my father's an awfully observant man. He was talking about Mark the other day. Dad says that when Mark was a kid he used to draw all the time. And they've got some pictures he drew in old school books and things. They're not bad. Dad says that before Mark married Cora Boyle and came to New York they all thought he was going to turn out an artist."

"Is it true that his whole success is because he decorates plays so well?"

"No. The truth is, he's an awfully good business man. And I've seen enough of the theatre to see that some of the managers and producers aren't any good at business. They mess about and talk and—He's coming back."

She saw Gurdy's eyes centre on Mark with a queer, tense look. The boy stood on the filthy pavement studying the theatre as the car drove east.

"Crazy about the place," said Mark, brushing his sleeve, "I do think people will like it, Olive. Won't be so dark that they can't read a program or so light the women'll have to wear extra paint. —My God, I'm glad Margot don't daub herself up! Well, she don't have to. And I'm glad she don't want to act."

"Why?" Olive asked, "You were an actor. You live entirely surrounded by actors. It's an

ancient and honourable calling—much more so than the law or the army."

Mark rubbed his short nose and grinned.

"I'm just prejudiced. I suppose it's because I used to hear how tough actresses were when I was a kid. And because Cora Boyle made a doormat of me. Ain't it true we never get over the way we're brought up?—That's what Gurdy calls a platitude, I guess."

"Gurdy's horridly mature for twenty-one, Mark."

"Thunder," said Mark, "He was always grown up and he's knocked around a lot for his age. Enough to make anybody mature!—And he's in love with sister up to his neck. You should have seen him take a runnin' jump and start for Chicago the minute he heard she was landing! Simply hopped the next train and flew! Stayed out there a month, pretty nearly. Brings his friends down over Sundays and then sits and watches them wobble round Margot like a cat watching a fat mouse. Love's awful hard on these dignified kids, Olive."

"You want them married?" she murmured.

"Of course.—I know I'm silly about the kids but I don't see where Margot'll get any one much better. Don't start lecturin' me and say that there's ten million eight hundred thousand and twenty-two better boys loose around than

Gurdy. You'd be talking at a stone wall. Waste of breath. And he's sensible about her too. A kid in love ordinarily wouldn't argue about anything the way he did about this play of Colonel Duffords. They had a regular cat fight and Gurdy's right. It's a pretty poor show.—This is the East river."

The car moved diligently through the heat. Olive thought that Gurdy had belied his outer calm by his flight to Chicago. But it was hard to think of anything save the thick air. Mark's tanned face was damp and he fanned Olive steadily. They swung past a procession of vans where the drivers lolled in torn undershirts. The rancorous sun on the houses of unfamiliar shingle dizzied her. She saw strange trees in the country as the suburbs thinned and the blistered paint of billboards showed strange wares for sale.

"Movie plant over there," said Mark, "Like to be movied for one of the current event weeklies? Lady Olive Ilden, the celebrated British authoress?"

"Horrors! Drinking tea with a Pom in my lap. Never!—Good heavens, Mark, is it like this summer after summer? Why don't people simply go naked?"

"Margot does her best. If her grandmother Walling could see her bathsuit she'd rise from the tomb."

"How long has your mother been dead, old man?"

"Since I was eight—no, nine."

"Do you look like her?"

"No. Joe—Margot's dad—looked something like her. His hair was nearly black and he had brown eyes. She was nice. Used to take her hair down and let me play with it. Black." He smiled, did not speak for minutes and then talked of Gurdy again, "He's mighty nice to his father and mother. Eddie and Sadie are scared he'll marry an actress on account of his bein' in my office. Gurdy was teasin' them last week—They came up to do some shopping. Said he'd got hold of a yellow headed stomach dancer. Called her some crazy French name.—My lord, haven't things changed on the stage since we were kids! I remember when Ruth Saint Denis was doing her Hindoo dances first and people were kind of shocked. I dropped in one afternoon and the place was packed full of women. Heard this drawly kind of voice behind me and looked round. It was Mark Twain and Mr. Howells. Ruth did a dance without much on and the women all gabbled like fury. But they all applauded a lot. Mr. Howells was sort of bored. He said, 'What are they making that fuss for, Sam?' 'Oh,' old Clemens said, 'they're hoping the next dance'll be dirtier so they can feel like Christians. My

God, he was a wonder to look at!—Ever think how much good looks do help a man along?"

"I can't think unless you fan me, Mark. My brain's boiling. How many more miles to a bath?"

"Twenty."

"I've always been fond of you," said Olive, "but I never realized what a brave man you were! You *work* in this furnace? Fan me!"

The cottage stood on a slope of presentable lawn that ended in a pebbly shore. The motor rushed through a fir plantation, reached the Georgian portico and Olive gladly smelled salt wind rising from the water fading in sunset.

"There she is," said Mark and whistled to a shape, black and tan against the sound, poised at the lip of a whitewashed pier. Margot came running and some men in bathsuits stared, deserted. The girl raced in a shimmer that reddened her legs to copper. Olive wondered if anything so alive, so gay existed elsewhere on this barbarous shore crushed by summer. Mark saw them happy, wiped his silly eyes and went down to chat in guarded grammar with the three young men from across the shallow bay. Inevitable that youngsters should come swimming and these were likeable fellows. Gurdy vouched for them. They slid soon like piebald seals into the water and swam off in a flurry of spray and bronze

arms. Delicate wakes of fine bubbling spread on the surface. The wet heads grew small in this wide space of beryl. Again he watched irreproducible beauty. . . . It was right that the best makers of scenes wouldn't paint the sea on backdrops. Let the people fancy it there below the vacancy of some open window. He must have the Cuban seas suggested thus in 'Captain Salvador.' He wished that Margot didn't dislike the tragedy. Perhaps its stiff denial of lasting love afflicted her. It afflicted Mark. And yet the poet was right. The passion in the play would be a fleet, hot thing, engrossing for a week, a month and then stale for ever. Lust went so. He nodded and picked up Margot's black and yellow bath wrap, a foolish, lovely cape in which she looked like an Arab. Then she called to him and he walked back to where she sat on the tiled steps reading a letter.

"Olive brought me a note from Doris Arbuthnot. Lives in Devonshire. She's a dear . . . rather like aunt Sadie but not quite so hefty. All the Wacks have come home from France, now, and they won't work. They sit about and talk to the heroes about France. Doris owns gobs of land and she's having a poky time.—What are you laughing at?"

"Your hair, sister."

She passed her hands over the sponge of black

down and shrugged, "Sorry I had it bobbed. All the typists do, over here. Olive's frightfully done up. Gone to bathe."

"Glad to have her, ain't you?"

"Ra—ther!—Oh, Cosmo Rand called up."

"What the—deuce did he want?"

"Ronny Dufford gave him a heap of notes about 'Todgers Intrudes.' I told him he'd best leave them at your office.—Shall you start rehearsing 'Todgers' as soon as the strike's over?"

She sneezed, the efflorescence of her hair flapping. Mark tossed the wrap about her, kissed her ear and sat down on the steps. He said, "Don't know, daughter. Fact is, this piece of Dufford's hasn't played to big business in London. I've got a report on it. Gurdy don't think—"

"Oh, Gurdy! He simply can't like a play unless it's about the long suffering proletariat or Russia!—Why didn't he come down?"

"Got a party with some men."

"And I wanted the brute to show me putting tomorrow! D'you put well? Of course you do! —Oh, I know 'Todgers' isn't a new Man and Superman, of course. But it's witty and it isn't commonplace—don't laugh."

Mark marshalled words, lighting a cigarette. "Honey, that's just the trouble with the thing. It is commonplace. It's all about nothing. And it's too blamed English. You and Gurd seem to

think it's the bounden duty of every one to know all the latest English slang off Piccadilly—or wherever they make slang up. It ain't so. We'll have to have some of this piece translated as it is. Suppose you were a stenographer going to the play? You wouldn't have been abroad. You wouldn't know an Earl beats a Baron. You wouldn't know that Chelsea's a big sister to Greenwich village and the slang'd bore you to death. There's that three speech joke about Gippies and Chokers in the second act. I expect that raised a laugh in London. How many folks in the house here would know it meant cigarettes? I didn't till you told me. Now in London with Ealy playing the Earl—he did, didn't he?—Well, with a smart man like that to play the Earl, the thing might go pretty well. If I had some one like that—"

Margot yawned, "Why not try Cosmo Rand? He played the Earl in London while Ealy was having the flu and had very good notices. He was awfully good in the scene where he rows with his wife. The poor devil's had a good deal of practice, they say. Cora Boyle leads him a dog's life. Ronny Dufford tells me that she's horribly jealous. Mr. Rand's had a success on his own, you know? He's not her leading man any more. —She doesn't like his getting ahead of her.—Now what are you laughing at?"

"The leopard don't change her spots," said Mark.

"Poor dad!"

"Oh, well," he said in a luxury of amusement, "She wasn't raised right. Her folks were circus people. I guess you couldn't imagine how tough the old style circus people were if you worked all night at it. This Rand's a nice fellow, is he?"

"Very pleasant. He rehearsed a lot of us in a show and we were all rather rotten and he was very patient.—I do wish Gurdy had come down! —We shan't have four for bridge. Might have Olive's maid play. She's dreadfully grand, you know? She's the Presidentess of the Chelsea Lady Helpers Associaton. Used to be in the scullery at Windsor and Queen Alexandra spoke to her once. I'm rather afraid of her."

"Is there any one you are afraid of, sister?"

She rose, the yellow and black gown moulding in, and gave her muffled, slow chuckle, patting the step with a sole. "Don't know. Gurdy, when he's grouchy. I must go dress.—Oh, I had whitewine cup made for dinner. That's what you like when it's hot, isn't it? Do put on a white suit for dinner, dad. Makes your hair so red. God be with you till we meet again."

She wandered over the white and red tiles of the portico, leaving a trail of damp, iridescent prints in the last glitter of the sun. She hummed

some air he did not know and this hung in his ear like the pulse of a muted violin when she herself was gone. The man sat dreaming until the night about him was dull blue and the wind died. He sat in warm felicity, guarding the silent house until the rose spark of the light across the bay began to turn and a silver, mighty star flared high on the darker blue of heaven.

VIII

Cosmo Rand

ON Saturday Gurdy brought down three young men who hadn't met Margot. He busily noted the chemistry of passion as two of his friends became maniacal by Sunday morning. Against the worn composure of Lady Ilden, the girl had the value of a gem on dim velvet. The third young man wanted to talk Irish politics to the Englishwoman who evaded him and retired to write a letter in her bedroom above the lawn.

She wrote to her husband at Malta: "I had always thought that Margot's success in London was due to her exotic quality. But she seems quite as successful on her native heath. This leads me to the general platitude that boys are the same the world over. I am a success here, too. Many callers, mostly female, in huge motor cars. The American woman seems to consider frocks a substitute for manners and conversation. Mark is anxious that Margot should marry Gurdy Bernamer and Gurdy is plainly willing. It would be suitable enough. The boy has smart friends

and will inherit £10,000 from old Mr. Carlson. Margot can float herself in local society no doubt. She is now playing tennis with two young brokers and a 22 year old journalist whose father owns half of some State. I have mailed you a strange work, 'Jurgen' by some unheard of person. Do not let any of the more moral midshipmen read it." She stopped, seeing Gurdy saunter across the lawn toward the beach and pursued him to where he curled on the sand. "You frighten me," she said, taking her eyes from the scar that showed its upper reach above his bathshirt, "you lie about two thirds naked in this sun and then tell me it's a cool day.—But I want to be documented in American fiction. I've read five novels since Wednesday. It seems to be established that all your millionaires are conscious villains and all your poor are martyrs except a select group known as gangsters. That's thrilling when the reviewers so loudly insist that your authors flatter the rich."

"Some of them do," Gurdy said, lifting his legs in the hot air.

In a bathsuit he lost his civilized seeming, was heroic, sprawled on the sand. Olive told him; "You're one of those victims of modernity, old son. You belong to thirteen forty. Green tights and a dark tunic trimmed with white fur. Legs are legs, aren't they?"

"Heredity's funny," he said, "I look exactly like my father."

"Margot's Uncle Eddie? She talks of him a good deal and of your mother. I was rather afraid her metropolitan airs and graces would shock your people but she seems to have had a jolly time down there—New Jersey's down from here, isn't it? She enjoyed herself.—Metropolitan airs and graces!—That's a quotation from something. Sounds like the *Manchester Guardian.*—Should I like your people?"

"You might. Grandfather's an atheist. Dad's a good deal of a cynic. They're awfully nice small town people. My sisters all wish they were movie stars and my kid brothers think that a fighting marine is the greatest work of God."

"And Margot says they all think you're the last and best incarnation of Siegfried. I should like to see them."

Gurdy shuddered. Grandfather Walling and Mrs. Bernamer held Lady Ilden responsible for the ruin of Margot as a relative. He imagined her artifice and her ease faced by the horrified family—a group of frightened colts stumbling off from a strange farmhand. He poured sand over his arm and lied, "You'd scare them. Mark's always talked about you as though you were the Encyclopædia Brittanica on two legs. You might be interested, though.—I say, Mark's

decided that he will produce 'Todgers Intrudes.' Thinks he'll have Cosmo Rand play the Earl. Can Rand really act?"

"Oh,—well enough for that sort of tosh. He's handsome and he has a pleasant voice. But it's rather silly of Mark to force such a poor play on the public because Margot wants Ronny Dufford out of debt. But he's so intoxicated with Margot just now that he'd do murders for her. Why didn't he come down for the week-end?"

Gurdy got up and yawned, "Oh, his treasurer's wife ran off with a man last Wednesday—while he was down here. He's trying to patch it up. —You know, he isn't at all cynical, Lady Ilden. He's very easily upset by things like that."

"I suppose he likes his treasurer? Then why shouldn't he be upset? The treasurer can't be enjoying the affair.—I wonder if you appreciate Mark's noble strain, Gurdy? I think I must send you a copy of the letter he wrote me after he'd packed you off to school. I showed it to my husband who has all the susceptibility of the Nelson monument and he almost shed tears. It took something more than mere snobbery or a desire for your future gratitude to make Mark send you away. It horribly hurt him. If paternal affection's a disease the man's a walking hospital! —There's the luncheon bell."

Gurdy ran into the water and furiously swam. Unless Lady Ilden was making amiable phrases Margot had lied to her about the family at Fayettesville. It was natural that she should tell Mark how she'd enjoyed the farm. That was prudent kindness, no worse than his own gratitudes when Mark gave him sapphire scarf-pins and fresh silver cigarette cases that he didn't need or want. But Margot shouldn't lie to Lady Ilden. Gurdy avoided the next week-end and went to Fayettesville where his family worried because Mark was losing money through the actors' strike.

"And he'll need all he can lay hands on with Margot to look after," said Mrs. Bernamer, rocking her weight in a chair on the veranda, "It ain't sensible for him to—to bow down and worship that child like he does. Oh, she's pretty enough!"

"Get out," Bernamer commented, "He'd be foolish about her if she'd got to wear spectacles and was bowlegged. Gimme a cigarette, Gurd. How near's the Walling finished?"

"Two thirds, dad.—Grandfather, you'll have to come up and sit in a box the opening night."

The beautiful old man blinked and drawled, "I wouldn't go up to N'York to see Daniel Bandmann play 'Hamlet'—if he was alive. How's old Mr. Carlson get on?"

Gurdy often found the contrast between his grandfather and Carlson diverting. The dying manager, a cynic, wanted Heaven in all the decorations of the Apocalypse. The old peasant lazily insisted that death would end him. He got some hidden pleasure from the thought of utter passage. Gurdy found this content stupendous. The farmer had never been two hundred miles from his dull acreage and yet was ready to be done with his known universe while Carlson wanted eternity. He cackled when the striking actors made peace and ordered wreaths sent to the more stubborn managers. His bitter tongue rattled.

"Why don't more writers write for the theatre, Gurdy? Ever been in Billy Loeffler's office? Five thousand bootlickers and hussies squatted all over the place. I sent that fellow Moody that wrote the 'Great Divide' to see Loeffler. Had to set in the office with a bunch of song carpenters from tin pan alley and a couple of tarts while Loeffler was prob'ly talkin' to some old souse he'd knew in Salt Lake City. And then Loeffler looks at the play and asks is there a soobrette part in it for some tomtit his brother was keepin'! A writer's got a thin skin, ain't he? Here Mark gets mad because this writer Mencken says managers are a bunch of hogs. Well, ain't they? Four or five ain't. Sure, they're hogs. Human

beings. Hogs. Same as the rest of mankind. Good thing Christ died to save us." He contemplated redemption through the cigarette smoke. His Irish nurse crossed herself in a corner. Carlson went on, "Say, that feller Russell Mark's got drillin' that English comedy is all right. Was in to see me, yesterday. Good head. Knows his job. Says this Rand pinhead is raisin' Cain at rehearsals. Better drop in there and see what goes on. Mark's so busy with that Cuban play he ain't got time."

Rehearsals of "Todgers Intrudes" went on at a small theatre below Forty Second Street. Gurdy drifted into the warm place and watched the director, Russell, working. On the bare stage five people progressed from point to point of the tepid comedy. Russell, a stooped, bald man of thirty-five, sat near the orchestra pit. Gurdy had watched the rehearsal ten minutes before Russell spoke. "Don't cross, there, Miss Marryatt. Stand still." Then, "still, please, Mr. Rand." On the stage Cosmo Rand gave the director a stare, shrugged and strolled toward the cockney comedian, the intrusive Todgers of the plot. Russell said nothing until a long speech finished, then, "You're all rushing about like cooties. Go back to Miss Marryatt's entrance and take all your lines just as you stand after she's sat down. Dora isn't pronounced Durrer, Mr. Hughes."

Gurdy was thinking of the long patience needed in this trade when Russell spoke sharply, "Mr. Rand, will you please stand still!"

"My God," said Rand, "must I keep telling you that I played this part in—"

"Will you be so good as to stand still?"

Rand continued his lines. Gurdy walked down and slipped into a chair beside the director, aware that the players stiffened as soon as they saw Mark's nephew. The handsome Miss Marryatt began to act. Cosmo Rand sent out his speeches with a pleasant briskness. Russell murmured, "Glad you happened in, Bernamer. This was getting beyond me. School children," and the act ended.

"Three o'clock, please," said the director. The small company trickled out of the theatre. Russell lit his pipe and stretched, grinning. "Rand's very capable and a nice fellow enough but he's difficult. Fine looking, isn't he? Come to lunch with me."

It was startling to be taken into an engineer's club for the meal. Russell explained, "I was an engineer. It's not so different from stage directing. You sometimes get very much the same material. I've often wanted some dynamite or a pickax at rehearsals. Nice that you floated in just now. I've a curiosity about this piece. Does Mr. Walling see money in it? I don't."

"He thinks it may go," said Gurdy.

"It won't. It's sewed up in a crape. If you had a young John Drew and a couple of raving beauties playing it might run six weeks. And Dufford hasn't any standing among the cerebrals. We might try to brighten the thing with some references to the Nourritures Terrestres or Freud. It's a moron. Prenatal influence. Mr. Walling tells me we're to open in Washington, too. My jinx! I went down there to offer up my life for the country and got stuck in the Q.M.C. supervising crates of tomatoes. Did you ever argue with a wholesale grocer about crates? It's worse than staging a revue."

"That's a dreadful thing to say!"

Russell broke a roll in his pointed fingers and shook his head. "No. . . . The revue's a very high form of comedy when it's handled right. It gets clean away with common sense, for one thing. And it hasn't a plot. I hate plots unless they're good plots. That's why this miserable 'Todgers' thing affects me so badly. I hoped Mr. Walling would let me help him with 'Captain Salvador.' But it's his baby."

"Is Rand giving you as much trouble as that every day?"

"Trouble? My dear man, you've never rehearsed a woman star who had ideas about her art! Rand's merely rather annoying, not trouble-

some. He's got no brains so his idea is to imitate the man who played the part in London. And he's never learned how to show off his looks, either. But very few Americans know how."

Gurdy liked the director and spent several afternoons at the rehearsals. Cosmo Rand fretted him. The slight man was obdurate. He raced about the stage until Russell checked him. His legs, sheathed always in grey tweed, seemed fluid. The leading woman had an attack of tonsilitis and halted proceedings. It was during this lapse that Gurdy encountered Cosmo Rand in a hotel lounge and nodded. The actor stopped him, deferentially, "I say, I'm afraid poor Russell's sick to death of me. I'm giving him a bit of trouble." Gurdy found no answer. The actor fooled with his grey hat, rubbed his vivid nails on a cuff, corrected his moustache and said, "The fact is—I do most sincerely think that Russell's wrong to drop all the English stage directions. Couldn't you—suggest that Mr. Walling drop in to watch sometime when Miss Marryatt's better and we're rehearsing again?"

His soft, round bronze eyes were anxious. He spoke timidly, the rosy fingernails in a row on his lower lip. He was something frail and graceful, a figure from a journal of fashions. Gurdy wondered whether Cora Boyle ever assaulted her poor mate and smiled.

"Mr. Walling has a good deal of confidence in Russell's judgment, Mr. Rand. But I'll speak to him if you like."

"I'd be most awf'ly grateful if you would, Mr. Bernamer. The play's such a jolly thing and one would like to see it do well. Ronny Dufford's rather a dear friend and—so very broke, you know?"

The rosy, trim creature seemed truly worried. Meeting Russell at the 45th Street office the next day, Gurdy told him that Rand's heart was breaking. The director grimaced, patting his bald forehead.

"The little tyke's worrying for fear he won't get good notices. And if this rubbish should fluke into a success he'll be made into a star. Have you ever observed the passion of the American public for second rate acting? Especially if it happens to have a slight foreign accent? Modjeska, Bandmann, Nazimova?—Well, Miss Marryatt's all right again. We'll rehearse some more tomorrow. Come and look on."

Mark had gone to Fayettesville for a few days. Gurdy attended the morning rehearsal of "Todgers Intrudes." Cosmo Rand trotted about the stage determinedly and Russell turned on Gurdy with a groan of, "This is beyond me. I'm getting ready to do murder. He's throwing the

whole thing out of key. I shall have to get your uncle to squash him."

"I'm beginning to see why Mr. Carlson loathes actors so," Gurdy whispered.

"Oh, Holy Moses," the director mourned, "look at him!—Slower, please, Mr. Rand!—It'll be awkward if I get Mr. Walling to squash him, Bernamer. You never can tell how these walking egoisms will break out. He may run about town saying that Mr. Walling's oppressing him cruelly. —My God, he'll be crawling up the scene in a minute!"

On the stage, Rand had excited himself to a circular movement about a large divan in the centre. He had somehow the look of a single racer coming home ahead of the other runners. The men and women standing still suggested a sparse audience for this athletic feat. It was ludicrous. Worse, Mark would never scold Cora Boyle's husband. Gurdy took a resolve. Margot had made Mark waste time with this silly play. She had proposed Rand for the part. She should help. He hurried to the station and reached the cottage in mid afternoon. A warm October wind made the fir trees whistle. He found Margot in a silk sweater of dull rose putting a tennis ball about the dry lawn. She smiled, tilting the golfstick across a shoulder,

and swayed her slim body back to look up at Gurdy.

"Dad just telephoned from the farm, old son. Wanted to know if you were here. It was something about 'Captain Salvador'."

"Oh, yes. I was hunting a tom tom for the Voodoo scene. He doesn't like the one they're using. Doesn't thud loudly enough.—Can I talk to you about 'Todgers Intrudes' without having a fight?"

"Of course you can."

"All right. It's going very badly. Mr. Russell, the director, has a free for all row with Mr. Rand every day. Rand acts like the last of a ballet. He's putting everything back. He's out of the picture all the time. Word of honour, Margot, the play hasn't nine lives. It's thin. It'll take a lot of work to make it go. Russell's one of the best directors going and he knows what he's doing. Rand simply runs all over the stage like that clown at the Hippodrome."

"That's rather the way it was played in London. Of course, that's no excuse. Have dad scold Rand."

"Be pretty awkward for Mark—scolding Cora Boyle's husband."

Margot said, "What utter tosh!"

"No, it's not. Mark's old fashioned—sensitive about things like that. And Rand might

take it as spite. Cora Boyle's back from California, Russell tells me. She's a fearful liar. If she hears that Mark jumped on her husband she'll tell all her friends that Mark's simply a swine. You don't know how gossip travels and gets—distorted. Once last May Mark said that he didn't like a gown that some woman was wearing in a play we'd been to the night before. He said that at lunch in the Claridge. Next day the woman's husband came into the office and wanted to thrash Mark. By the time the story got to him it had swelled up like a balloon. This fellow had got it that Mark said his wife looked like a streetwalker and acted like one.—It's all very awkward. Couldn't you—"

"Oh, look here! Because I suggested Cossy Rand for the Earl I'm not going to drynurse him! —I think you're frightfully hypersensitive about his being married to Cora Boyle. They're hardly ever together. It's taking a theatrical menage as seriously as—"

"Oh, for heaven's sake," Gurdy broke in, watching the red streaks mount her face, "I'm sorry! Let's drop it. You know Rand. I thought you might write him a line and tell him to calm down. That was all. Mark's working himself sick over 'Captain Salvador' and that's an important production. Every one's interested in it. Some of the critics have read it and think

it's the best American play in years. After all, you got Mark into this 'Todgers' thing. He's doing it.to please you. He'll worry if he has to—"

Margot laughed, whipped the ball away neatly with one foot and tossed her hair back. She said, "I'll write Rand, of course. Of course I don't want 'Todgers' to get a black eye. I'll send him a note and tell him to carry on. Perhaps he's rather opinionated. Where's he stopping?"

"The Knickerbocker."

She yawned, "I'll write him, then. Staying for dinner?" She turned and roamed off in her swaying fashion. Directly, a motor swung about the house. One of the neighbours had come to take the girl driving. She waved to Gurdy and disappeared. He resented the waving of the brown hand. It was impossible not to resent her kind mentions of his mother and sisters before Lady Ilden and Mark.

He resented, too, the airy changes from tart rage to suavity. Their talks became a tedious, uncertain duet with one performer unwilling. Gurdy strolled into the cottage and Olive Ilden looked up from a novel.

"What have you been quarrelling with Margot about?" she asked.

"Not quarrelling."

"Nonsense. I could see you through the

doors. You were quarrelling and she began it. Tell me."

She closed the book and regarded him, not smiling, from her wicker chair. There was an odd alarm in her eyes under which hollows showed. The negligent trail of her black gown was dusted with cigarette ash. Gurdy stared, upset.

"We weren't quarrelling. Cosmo Rand's making an ass of himself at the rehearsals. She rather planted him on Mark. Mark's so sensitive about Cora Boyle that Russell—the man who's rehearsing 'Todgers'—and I don't want to worry Mark with the mess. I wanted Margot to write Rand a note and tell him to buck up. He's holding the rehearsals back. Here it's almost the first of November. Mark's got a theatre in Washington for a couple of weeks from now and the play isn't half ready."

Olive tapped a cigarette holder on the walnut, Dutch table and looked at the floor. Then she raised her eyes and smiled, spoke without artifice.

"I shan't let her write to Rand, Gurdy. She's too much interested in him. I don't like it. She cabled him to come over here as soon as she'd bullied Mark into buying the rights to 'Todgers Intrudes.' The little idiot thinks him a great actor. I'm sure I don't know why. I don't at all like this. I only found it out yesterday.

Mark wouldn't like it. The man's married and if he happens to tell people Margot sent for him —I quite understand theatrical gossip, Gurdy. Mark's a great person and it would make quite a story. And of course there are rats who don't like Mark."

"How did you find this out, Lady—"

"In the silliest way. I was talking about Ronny Dufford and Margot began to argue that this wretched play is really good. She rather lost her temper. She told me you'd tried to persuade Mark not to produce the thing to spite her. I—" Olive laughed unhappily, "I hadn't the faintest idea that you'd quarrelled. You're rather too cool, old man. I've been teasing you all this time fancying that you were wildly in love with the child and it seems that you're at odds.— Oh, It's all utter nonsense, of course! But I don't like it. It's a pose. She rather prides herself on being unconventional. And the silliest part of it is that she feels she's done Mark a favour."

"She's probably cost him about fifteen thousand dollars," said Gurdy.

This was antique, this tale of a handsome, dapper actor and a girl gone moonstruck over his pink face. Gurdy grunted, "We can't tell Mark this. He'd be upset. It's idiotic."

Olive laughed, "Oh, you mustn't get excited

over it, Gurdy. The play will fail and she'll drop Rand. It's a gesture, you see? The clever girl doing the unconventional thing." She became comfortable, then artificial. "You mustn't take Margot at her own valuation, dear. She's the moment—the melodramatic moment. What's that American slang? She's no—no ball of fire! She admires people easily and drops them easily. She's eighteen. She was quite lost in adoration of the Countess of Flint two years ago and then the poor woman did something the child didn't like—wore the wrong frock, probably—and that was all over. The poor lady died in Colorado yesterday—That means consumption, doesn't it? I read the notice to Margot at breakfast and she said, 'Really.' Rand flattered her about her acting, I fancy, and she thinks he's remarkable in return for the compliment. Every normal female gets mushy—I'm quite Americanized—over an actor at eighteen. When I was eighteen I wrote a five act tragedy and sent it to—Merciful Heaven—I've forgotten who he was! Beerbohm Tree, probably. But I must congratulate you on your attitude. You had a frightful row at Fayettesville. She said, herself, that she was to blame. She hurt you. And you've not shown it in the least."

"It didn't amount to much.—But, Mark wouldn't like this business. And of course some

people don't like him. They'd be ready to talk if they thought she was flirting with—"

"But she isn't! If she was I'd drag her off to Japan with me. She's hardly spoken to the man except at those rehearsals last winter. It'll die a swift death when the play fails, old man. We've no use for failures at eighteen."

Olive laughed, repeated the prophecy in a dozen turning phrases and drove with Gurdy to the station after dinner. But she was oppressed. She could image Mark's bewilderment clearly. He found Rand a somewhat comic person, a frail young poser towed after the robust beauty of his wife, perhaps bullied. The car brought Olive back to the white portico of the cottage and she found Margot distracting a middle aged sugar broker. It was time for bed when the addled man's car puffed away. Margot yawned and mounted the brown stairs in a flutter of marigold skirts. The living-room fell still. Olive settled at a table and commenced a letter to Ilden. "I shall not start for Japan for some time. Margot is behaving rather queerly. Having fancied that I could follow the eccentric curves of her mind I am much annoyed to find that I can not. This cottage will be closed next week. Heaven knows what will become of the furniture unless Mark should use it in a play. I have a curiosity

to see the opening of his new theatre. He is working frantically over the play for its opening. Gurdy Bernamer tells me that a New York first night is like nothing else on earth for bounderishness. He says that awful and obscene creatures come creeping from nowhere and flap about in free seats and that all the cinema queens appear covered with rubies. It—"

The telephone on the table clicked but did not ring. Olive glared at the instrument. She abominated the telephone since it had brought her news of her son's death. She finished her letter and climbed the stairs, aching for bed after a nervous day. Then she heard Margot talking behind the closed door of her room. The girl hadn't a maid. Olive's own maid was visible in her chamber at the end of the corridor. Olive passed on. She came back on impulse and heard "All right, Cossy. Carry on. 'By—ee." Then the small clatter of Margot's bedside telephone set on the glass of a table. Olive opened the door and saw the girl subsiding into the mass of her pillows.

"I've just blown Cosmo Rand up properly, Olive."

"I wondered why you were talking."

Margot yawned, "Gurdy asked me to write him. I'd rather talk. His dear wife's back

from California and his voice sounded as though they'd been throwing supper dishes at each other. He didn't seem pleased."

"My dear, I don't see why Mr. Rand should be pleased to be lectured on his art over the telephone at midnight!"

"It's rather cheeky, isn't it? But Gurdy made such a point of it. And all I could say was that he mustn't be too difficult at rehearsals. But that's all I could have said in a note. It seems to me that it's distinctly dad's business. But Gurdy's such an everlasting old woman about dad! And I am rather responsible for bringing 'Todgers' over. Dare say I ought to help out, if I can."

Olive slung a dart carelessly, asking, "What's Rand's real name, dear?"

"Rand."

"I meant the Cosmo. That's not an American name at all."

"Don't know, I'm sure. I don't like it, anyhow. But it might be his own. He's from some town in Iowa and they name children fearful things like Eliander and Jerusha, out there." She chuckled, slipping a tawny shoulder in and out of her robe. Her face rippled, "I really think Cosmo's a rather ghastly name. Sounds like a patent soup. Wonder why they named dad Mark? Gurdy's real name's George." She

yawned, "I suppose all actors get rather opinionated."

"As they're mostly rank egotists," said Olive and closed the door.

Perplexity remained in her strongly wrestling with the desire for sleep. She lay composing a letter to Cosmo Rand—"As your position toward Mr. Walling is delicate and you are under obligations to Miss Walling may I suggest that you maintain a purely formal relation toward—" It wouldn't do. Words to a shadow. She knew nothing of the man. He was a graceful figure at parties in London, considerably hunted by smart women for Sunday night dinners before the war. If the comedy failed and Mark dismissed him Rand might make an ill-tempered use of such a letter. Olive shrugged off the idea lay wondering why a pleasant voice and a head of curly hair seen across footlights should convince Margot that here was a great actor. It was disappointing. Olive had thought Margot steeled against crazes. The girl had a general appreciation of the arts as seen about London. Olive faintly sighed. But the pleasing man might embody some fancy or other, fulfil some buried wish. We go groping and stumbling among fancies, the woman thought, and see nothing very clearly. She consoled herself with the platitude and went to sleep.

IX

Bubble

"TODGERS INTRUDES" now went smoothly. Mark came to one of the last rehearsals, approved Russell's method but, as they walked up Broadway, told Gurdy that this was a "lousy" play. All plays were just then nonsense beside "Captain Salvador." Mark's absorption seemed to exclude even Margot of whom the idolator once gently complained. The dark goddess had returned to town, been a week at the Fifty Fifth Street house and was sitting with Olive at the rear of the 45th Street Theatre. Her voice reached Mark clearly where he stood assembling the picture for a scene, a leg swung over the rail of the orchestra pit.

"She don't seem so much interested in 'Salvador,' Gurd. Why's that?"

"Rather heavy for her, perhaps."

Mark rubbed his nose and accepted wisdom. A girl of eighteen mightn't care for this tale of shipwrecked ruffians, frantic negroes, moonlit death. And what innocent girl of eighteen could know or believe that men got tired of women? Gurdy understood and was helpful, had found a

wailing negro song for the shipboard scene of the first act. Mark beamed at Gurdy, then turned to the stage and patiently corrected the six negro actors timid among the white folk of the big company, pathetic in sapphire and sage green suits.

"You boys in a circle 'round the table, left. Keep looking at Mr. Leslie."

He picked spots for the grouping. His brown fingers pointed. He named attitudes, dropping his lids as he built the picture with glances at the water colour sketch in his hand. An intricate chatter began on the stage. Gurdy slipped up the aisle and joined Olive under the balcony.

"How careful he is," she whispered, "like a ballet master."

Gurdy nodded, "No one'll move without being told to. The whole thing's planned. He's going to run the lights himself in Boston, next Monday."

"You'll go up there with him? He looks dreadfully thin." His black height made a centre against the footlights. His mastery of this human paint was impressive, admirable. He visibly laboured, silent, listening. She asked, "Would he work as hard over an ordinary, commercial play?"

"No. Oh, he'd work hard but not as hard as this."

Margot glanced across Olive, then at her watch.

She said, "Let's clear out, Olive. Teatime."

"I'd much rather stay here. Fascinating."

"But you told Mrs. Marlett Smith you'd come."

Olive sighed and gathered her furs. It was important that Margot should go to this tea at the Marlett Smith house. Mrs. Marlett Smith was a liberal, amusing woman who had met Mark by way of some playwright and had called on Olive at the seaside cottage. They left the theatre and Gurdy came to open the door of the blue car. To him Margot suddenly spoke, "How will dad open this silly thing in Boston, Monday night and get to Washington by Tuesday night to open 'Todgers'?"

"We'll be there," he said and closed the door.

Olive looked back at his colourless dress, his shapely head and vanishing grave face with a frank wistfulness. "I don't see why you should make such a point of annoying Gurdy. And why call this play silly when it's so plainly good? . . . I've carefully refrained from asking you why you quarrelled with Gurdy. He behaves charmingly to you and keeps the peace."

"Paying him back for being nasty about 'Todgers Intrudes.' "

"But he's not been nasty. He's very sensibly given his opinion that it's feeble. As it is.—The

man's taking us down Broadway. Loathsome sewer!"

The motor slowly passed toward Forty Second Street and across that jam. Olive saw lean and stolid Englishmen stalking in the harsh, dusty November wind that blew women along in the whirling similitude of rotted flowers. Margot got notice, here. There was a jerk of male heads from the curb. Empty faces turned to the girl's brilliance in rose cloth. A tanned sailor flapped his white cap. Yet in the Marlett Smith library on Park Avenue Margot was prettily discreet for half an hour below Chinese panels, among gayer frocks where she lost colour, merged in a fluctuation of dress. On the way home her restraint snapped into a "Damn!"

"Very stiff," said Olive, "One reads about the American informality. Tea at Sandringham is giddy beside this. But Mrs. Marlett Smith's clever. Who were those twins in black velvet who so violently kissed you?"

"The Vaneens. Ambrosine and Gretchen. Knew them at school. They come out in December.—But what maddens me is this everlasting jabber about France! Some of those girls know Gurdy. Their brothers were at Saint Andrew's with him. He seems to have made himself frightfully conspicuous about Paris.

—No, I'm bored with Gurdy. If dad tries to make me marry him I'll take poison and die to slow music. Such tosh! He made a gesture of enlisting—"

"You're being silly," Olive said, coldly hurt, "and I'm sick of the word, gesture. Pray, was the gesture of third rate artists and actors who wouldn't leave their work anything madly glorious? I can understand a man conscious of great talent preferring to stick to his last. And I can understand a complete refusal to mix in the —abominable business. But I've no patience with dreary little wasters who shouted for blood and then took acetanilid to cheat the doctors. As for Gurdy's military career he's very quiet about it. I dislike this venom against Gurdy."

Margot chuckled, "Perhaps I'm jealous," and got down before the house. She opened the door with her latchkey and they entered a flow of minor music from the drawing room. Gurdy was playing. Mark leaned on the curve of the piano and his brown hands were deeply reflected in the black pool of it's top.

"Listen to this, Olive. Nigger song Gurdy raked up for 'Captain Salvador.' Sing it, sonny. Don't run off, Margot. Listen." He caught the girl to him, held her cheek against his chin. A scent of mild sandal and cigarettes ebbed from the black hair into his nostrils. He was tired

after the tense rehearsal and chilled from half an hour in the cold of the Walling. This moving warmth and scent was luxury. Mark shut his eyes. Gurdy chanted in plausible barytone.

"Life is like a mountain rail-way,
From the cradle to the grave.
Keep yoh hand upon the throttle
An' yoh eyes—upon—the—rail. . . ."

It would sound splendidly in the dim forecastle of the first scene. It would float and die under the blue vault of the Walling. He had just seen the lights turned on a recession of faint silver rims in the dull cloud of that ceiling. He was still drugged by the sight. His theatre was like a desirable body promised to his arms. Gurdy played again the slow air in curious variations, flutters of notes. Mark opened his eyes to watch the slide of the long fingers on the keys. Olive was smiling.

"Delightful. Very moral, too. Sound advice. How well you play, Gurdy!"

"Always did," said Mark, "He could play like a streak when he was ten. Come along up and have a fight with Mr. Carlson, daughter."

Olive let Margot's voice melt into the old man's cackle above. Gurdy said, "We went to the Walling after rehearsal, Lady Ilden. Honestly, it's a corker. The ceiling's nearly finished. Theatres don't last, worse luck. But there's

nothing like it in the city. Mark's worked like a pup over it.—How was your tea?"

"Very decent. Varieties of women, there. Almost no men. A débutante told me she admired Walt Whitman more than most English poets and was rather positive that he was English. I can't understand the American tabu on Whitman."

"Immoral."

"But—good heavens!—I fascinated two elderly girls by telling them I knew Swinburne. Swinburne was lewd. Poor Whitman was merely rather frank."

"But Algie was a foreigner," Gurdy laughed, "so it was all right. Margot have a good time?"

Olive asked, "What were you and Margot rowing about in the library last night? I could hear her voice getting acid."

Gurdy commenced a waltz and said, "We weren't rowing. Mark asked me whether Cosmo Rand was in the British army. He wasn't and I said so. She seemed to think I was sniffing at Rand and blew me up a little. That was all. We made peace. I rather like Rand, you know, now that he's stopped making an ass of himself at rehearsals. Russell and I had lunch with him today. He talks well. He knows a lot about painting, for instance. These actors who've been all over the landscape and don't think they're

better than Richard Mansfield—pretty interesting. There's not much to Rand but he isn't a —a walking egotism."

Olive laughed, "Come back to Margot. She's pointedly offensive to you and rather assertive about it. I hope you'll go on being patient and try to remember how young she is. You're very mature for twenty-one. You never bray. I brayed very wildly at Margot's age. I horribly recall telling Henry Arthur Jones how to improve his plays and one of my saddest memories is of telling a nice Monsieur Thibault what a poor novel Thaïs was. He quite agreed with me. I didn't know he was Anatole France until he left the room. I've all the patience going with youth. You're almost too mature."

"Don't know about being mature," said Gurdy, "I'm not, probably. But every other book you read is all about youth—golden youth—youth always finds a way—ferment. Get pretty tired of it. Makes me want to be forty-nine. And some of the poets make me sick. Hammering their chests and saying, Yow! I'm young! . . . Not their fault. I'm not proud of being six foot one. Runs in the family."

"That's a very cool bit of conversation, old man. You've taken me away from Margot twice, very tactfully, so I'll drop it. Play some Debussy. His music reminds me of a very hand-

some man with too much scent on his coat. Can't approve of it. Rather like it."

He evaded discussions of Margot until Sunday night when he went with Mark to Boston for the opening of "Captain Salvador" there. On Monday night he sat, a spy, in the middle of the large audience. A critic had come from New York to see this play before it should reach the metropolitan shoals. Gurdy saw the slender, sharp face intent. The ten scenes of the Cuban romance passed without a hitch before the placid Bostonians. Mark was directing the lights that raised peaks of gloom on the walls, sent shimmerings along the moonlit beach where the hero squatted in a purple shadow. About him Gurdy heard appropriate murmurs. A fat woman whimpered her objection to the half naked celebrants of the Voodoo scene. An old man complained that this was unlike life. Two smart matrons chatted happily about a Harvard cabal against some friend while "Captain Salvador" effected his wooing. A thin boy in spectacles wailed an argument that true art wasn't possible in a capitalistic nation. A girl giggled every time the sailors of the story swore and almost whinnied when the word, "strumpet" rattled over the lights. But this herd redeemed itself in heavy applause. The thin boy wailed a blanket assent to the merits

of the plot and the setting, "After all, Walling's Irish and he studied under Reinhardt in Berlin. The Kelts have some feeling for values." Still the fat woman thought, loudly, that the play didn't prove anything and Gurdy decided that one of his future satires must be named, The Kingdom of Swine. He found Mark in high delight behind the scenes, snapping directions to his manager, his leading man and the electrician in the New Jersey singsong. "Have the tomtom some louder for the Voodoo, Ike. Bill, you send all the notices special delivery to the Willard in Washington. Mr. O'Mara's in Hayti if the *Transcript* wants an interview. Beach scene blue enough, Gurdy? All right, Ed, I told you it was. Now, Leslie, take your fall at the end quieter, a little. You're all right, the rest of it. Come along, Gurdy. Taxi's waiting." In the taxi, he cried, "Damn this lousy 'Todgers' thing, son! I want to stay here. People liked it, huh?"

"They did.—Oh, you're Irish and you learned all your business from Reinhardt."

"Sure! Blame it on Europe!—My God, didn't the tomtom business go like a breeze? —Oh, this 'Todgers' thing'll be too bad. Tell you, I'll play it in Washington and Philadelphia. Baltimore, if it don't just roll on its belly and die.

Sorry if Margot gets sore.—She and Olive went to Washington s'afternoon, didn't they, huh? —Was the ship-scene light enough, sonny?"

He sat in their stateroom on the train, his eyes still black with excitement and drank watered brandy. He dreamed of "Captain Salvador's" first night at the Walling and tremors of applause mounting to the blue vault of that perfected ceiling. He was so tired that he struggled, undressing.

"Mark, you're thin as a bean! Nothing but some muscles and skin."

Mark flexed his arms, beamed up at the tall boy's anxiety and rolled into his berth. The mussed red hair disappeared under a pillow. Gurdy smoked and stared humbly. . . . This was surely half of an artist, laborious, patient, contriving beauty. The man had this strange perception of the lovely thing. He should do better and better. If his trade was that of the booth, the sale of charming sensualities, he raised it by his passion. He begot fondness. He created. Gurdy tucked the blankets over the blue silk pyjamas and planned a long talk on the purpose of the theatre for the morning, then wondered what that purpose was and put the lecture off. They fled all morning down the land and came to Washington in time for late lunch with Russell at the Shoreham where Mark halted to

look at a pretty, dark woman in the suave, grey lounge smelling of flowers, fell behind Gurdy and Russell, found himself suddenly lifting his hat to Cora Boyle. She wore a cloak banded with black fur and a gold hat too young for her paint. Mark smiled, rather sorry for the blown coarseness of her chin, asked how she liked California and heard her flat voice crackle.

"A nightmare! All these girls who were absolutely no one last week in ten thousand dollar cars! No, I'm glad they brought me east. I'm taking three days off to see Cosmo start this. Tells me it plays here the rest of the week, then Philadelphia.—When are you bringing it into New York?"

He shifted a little and said, "Can't say, Cora. Hard to get a house in New York, right now. This thing I've got at the Forty Fifth Street is doin' big business. Todgers'll be on the road two weeks, anyhow, before I decide what'll become of it—"

"What are you opening the Walling with?"

" 'Captain Salvador.' Opened in Boston last night. Best play I've ever touched! Say, remind me to send you seats when it opens the Walling."

"That's dear of you.—But couldn't you get one of the small houses for Cosmo? The Princess or the Punch and Judy? Intimate comedy. Cosmo

really does better in a small house. And—" she smiled—"you could take a bigger one after a month or so."

He had an awed second of wonder. She'd been almost thirty years on the stage and she thought "Todgers Intrudes" a good play! He began to say, "But, do you think this will—" Then two men charged up to shake hands with the actress. Mark scuttled down the stairs toward the grill. If she was quarrelling with Rand her manner didn't show it. "Cosmo really does better in a small house." He joined Russell and Gurdy at their table, puzzled and said, "Say, if she's fighting with Rand it's funny she'd come down to see him open this flapdoodle."

"Habit," Russell shrugged, "They've been married twelve years. But are they fighting? I had breakfast with them this morning and she almost crucified herself because his tea wasn't right."

Mark wondered why Margot thought that Rand and the woman quarrelled. But he shed the wonder. He liked Washington especially as the pale city showed itself now in a vapour where the abiding leaves seemed glazed in their red and yellow along the streets. Olive knew people here. There was a tea with a British attaché. Margot's rose cloth suit gleamed about

the dancing floor of the restaurant. Gurdy had friends who were produced, fell subject to Margot and came between the acts that night to lean over the girl's chair in the box of the big theatre. "Todgers Intrudes" went its placid course. Rand gave, Mark fancied, an excellent imitation of an English conservative. The packed house laughed at the right points. Margot's face rippled so eagerly that Mark wanted to kiss it and covertly held her hand below the rail. Why, this was the pretty, gentle sort of nonsense eighteen years would relish! A pity it had no staying wit. A pity this fragile, polished man she so admired wasn't a real comedian. Mark looked at Gurdy's stolid boredom and the fine chest hidden by the dinner jacket beyond Olive's bare shoulders. It might be as well to let Gurdy tell Margot the play wouldn't do for New York. Mark shrank from that. Gurdy could put the thing much better in his cool, bred fashion.—Here and there men were leaving the theatre with an air of final retirement. In the opposite box there was a waving of feathers. How well Cora Boyle could use a fan!—A youngster with curly orange hair slipped into his box as the second curtain fell. Gurdy introduced young Theodore Jannan to Olive and Margot, then to Mark. Mr. Jannan had come over from Philadelphia to do something

in Washington. This play—the Jannan heir bit off a "rotten"—was advertised as coming to Philadelphia next week.

"Opens there Monday," said Mark.

"My mother's giving a baby dance for my sister. Couldn't you bring Miss Walling, Gurdy? Monday night."

How smoothly Margot said she'd like to come to a dance at Mrs. Apsley Jannan's house in Philadelphia! The nonsense of social position! An illusion. A little training, a little charm, good clothes.—A Healy, one of Margot's cousins, had risen to be a foreman in one of the Jannan steel mills.—Gurdy had played football with this pleasant lad at Saint Andrew's school. Who on earth would ever know or care that Margot and Gurdy were born on a farm? The last curtain fell. Margot wanted to dance. Russell came to join the party. They went to a restaurant and found a table at the edge of the oval floor. Margot's yellow frock was swept off into the florid seething on Gurdy's arm. Russell poured brandy neatly into the coffee pot and shrugged to Mark.

"Bad sign. Fifteen or twenty men left in the second act. We'll have a vile time in Philadelphia, Lady Ilden. It's a queer town on plays. —There come the Rands."

A headwaiter lifted a "Reserved" sign from a table across the floor. Cora Boyle and her hus-

band appeared in the light threaded by cigarette smoke. The actress draped a green and black skirt carelessly, refused to dance with a British officer in a trim pantomime, bowed slowly to Mark who was taken with fright. She'd want to talk about this drivelling play and before her slight, quiet husband. He slipped a bill under the edge of Russell's plate.

"Bring Olive back to the hotel will you Russell? I'm all in. 'Night, Olive."

His retreat through the smoky tables was comic. Russell fingered his chin. Olive ended by laughing, "He's ridiculously timid about her."

The director patted his bald forehead and drank some coffee. He said, "It happens that he's got some reason. Miss Boyle's bad tempered and an inveterate liar. She's fond of her husband and she seems to think this comedy will have a New York run. Mr. Walling means to let it die on the road, naturally. She won't like that. She'll talk. Her voice will be loud all up and down Broadway."

"But—surely he's callous to that sort of thing?"

"Do you see anything callous about him? I don't." The director nodded to the floating of Margot's skirt. "This is the first time I've ever directed a play put on to please a débutante, Lady Ilden.—No, Mr. Walling seems mighty sen-

sitive to gossip.—And Cora Boyle's in a strong position. She's a woman—obviously—and she can make a good yarn. Spite, and so on. She's quite capable of giving out interviews on the subject. She can't hurt Mr.Walling but she might cause any quantity of gossip,—which he couldn't very well answer. She can play the woman wronged, you see?"

"What a nation of woman worshippers you are!"

"Were," said Russell, "We're getting over it."

"I don't see any signs of it."

Russell said, "You can't send two million men into countries where women—well, admit that they're human, not goddesses, anyhow, without getting a reaction. My wife's a lawyer. She helped a young fellow—an ex-soldier—out of some trouble the other day and he told her she was almost as nice as a foreigner—Ten years ago if Cora Boyle had wanted to have a fight with Mr. Walling she could have taken the line that he was jealous of Rand and she'd have found newspapers that would print front page columns about it. She'd get about two paragraphs now.—But she probably has better sense. Beastly handsome, isn't she?"

"Very—brutta bestia bella. Gurdy tells me she's paid a thousand dollars a day to play Camille for the cinema. Why?"

"Oh . . . she's the kind of thing a lot of respectable middle aged women adore, I think. —Look at them."

There were many women in the rim of tables. They stared at the flaring green and black gown, at the exhibited bawdry of gold wrought calves, at the feathers of the waving, profuse fan. There was an attitude of furtive adventure in the turn of heads. They stared, disapproved, perhaps envied.

" 'Some men in this, some that, their pleasure take, but every woman is at heart a rake,' " Olive quoted.

The director laughed, "You're right.—And I often think that the movie queens take the place of an aristocracy in this country. Something very fast and bold for the women to stare at. Now Rand, there, is the ideal aristocrat—in appearance, anyhow, don't you think? And nobody's looking at him. I wonder if Miss Walling would dance with me?"

He relieved Gurdy close to the Rand table. When the boy joined Olive she asked, "Mr. Russell isn't a typical stage director, is he? . . . I thought not. One of the new school in your theatre? A well educated man? . . . Rather entertaining."

"He writes a little. Been an engineer. Stage directors are weird. One of them used to be an

Egyptologist.—I say, help me keep Mark here the rest of the week, will you? He's dead tired. Did he run when he saw Cora Boyle coming?"

"Yes. He seems positively afraid of her!"

Gurdy said, "He is afraid of her. Great Scott, he was only sixteen when he married her and dad says he was—pretty blooming innocent. Mark's all full of moral conventions, Lady Ilden. Ever noticed that?"

"When you were in pinafores, my child! I always thought he'd shed some of his Puritan fancies. He doesn't."

"Grandfather's awfully strict, even if he is an atheist. And mother . . . isn't what you'd call reckless. They brought him up. And he still thinks their . . . well, moral standards are just about right.—I'm the same way. Got it pounded into me at school that bad grammar and loud clothes were immoral. Don't suppose I'll get over that.—Mark says he's never flirted with a married woman in his life."

Olive yawned, "I don't suppose that he has, consciously. Oh, to be sure, I can understand why Mark would think of Miss Boyle as the Scarlet Woman. The Puritan upbringing.—We never quite get over early influences, Gurdy. I always find myself bristling a bit over dropped H's even when a famous novelist does the dropping.—Mark prophesies bad reviews for the play,

in the morning. Do leave word to have the papers sent up to me. I'm so sleepy I shall forget about it.—Thank heaven, Margot's stopped dancing."

In their double bedroom at the New Willard Margot talked jauntily of "Todgers Intrudes," until Olive fell asleep wondering why the girl should interpret amiable laughter as the shout of success. In the morning two newspapers arrived with breakfast. The critics praised the acting and both sniffed at the play. Olive read the columns over her tea. Both critics dealt kindly with Rand. One thought his manner resembled that of Cyril Maude, the other said that he imitated George Arliss. Margot came trailing a green robe from the bathtub and stood pressed against the brass bedfoot reading the comments. The sun redoubled on her silver girdle and the numerous polychrome tassels of the foolish, charming drapery inside which her body stirred before she cried, "How American! Thin! It's no thinner than that rot dad has running at the Forty Fifth Street!"

"My darling Margot, that's thin American comedy. It's something national, comprehensible. As for 'Todgers,' why—why should you expect a pack of American war office clerks and provincials to care whether a Baron precedes an Earl or no? I can't help being surprised that so

many of them seemed to know what it was all about! The play is thin—horribly thin. I'm sure it did well at home on account of Maurice Ealy's following. The critics say rather nice things about Rand, all things considered. . . . Well, were you impressed with him last night? Do you still think he's a fine actor?"

Margot tilted her face toward the ceiling and the sun made a visard across her narrowed eyes. She twisted the silver girdle between her hands and stood silent. Olive felt the final barrier between creatures, suddenly and keenly. She had lived in intimacy with the girl for five years. Here was a strange mind revolving under the black, carven hair and the mask of sun.

"No, I didn't think him very good, last night. Nervous.—And perhaps the play did seem rather thin. . . . But it'll do better in New York. More civilized people, there."

Olive lifted her breakfast tray to the bedside table and thought. Then her patience snapped, before the girl's sunny and motionless certitude. She said, "New York! Do you think Mark will risk bringing this poor ghost of a thing to New York? Hardly! He told me last night it will be played in Philadelphia and Baltimore, then he'll discard it.—You're silly, dearest! The play's wretched and Rand's no better than a hundred other young leading men I've seen.

He appeals to you for some reason or other. He seems very, very feeble to me. He has no virility, no—"

The silver girdle broke between the tawny hands. Margot's face rippled. She said loudly, "This is all Gurdy! He doesn't like the play! He's made dad dislike it. He—"

Olive cut in, "I shan't listen to that! That's mere ill temper and untrue. The play is a waste of Mark's time and of his money.—Between your very exaggerated loyalty to Ronny Dufford and your liking for this doll of an actor you've probably cost Mark three or four thousand pounds. He produced this play entirely to please you. Don't tease him any farther. Don't try to make him bring this nonsense to New York. You've a dreadful power over Mark. Don't trade on it! You're behaving like a spoiled child. You disappoint me!"

The black eyes widened. Margot pushed herself back from the bed with both hands, staring. She said, "I—I dare say. . . . Sorry."

"You should be! . . . He's done everything he can to keep you amused. He isn't a millionaire. You've been treated like a mistress of extravagant tastes, not like a daughter! There is such a thing as gratitude. He's humoured you in regard to this silly play and in regard to Rand. Gurdy and Mr. Russell tell me that Cora Boyle

can make herself a disgusting nuisance now that the play's a failure. You've pushed Mark into this very bad bargain. Don't make it worse by whimpering, now, and don't—"

"Oh, please!"

"Then please bite on the bullet and let's hear no more of this. When Mark tells you he'll drop the play, don't tease him."

Margot said, "Poor Ronny Dufford! I thought—"

"I'm sorry Ronny's broke. It's the destiny of younger sons whose fathers had a taste for baccarat. I shall start for Japan as soon as I've seen the Walling opened. I shan't go in a very easy frame of mind if I feel that you've constituted yourself a charitable committee of one with Mark as treasurer."

Olive laughed. Margot said, "Yes, m'lady," and made a curtsey, then fluttered off to telephone for breakfast, began to chuckle and the delicate chime of that mirth was soothing, after the rasp of Olive's tirade. The girl seemed unresentful. Olive had never so seriously scolded her. Now she thought that she should talk to Mark about his folly. This idolatry was delightful to watch but unhealthy, a temptation to Margot. The girl had other pets in London. There was an amateur actress constantly wobbling on the edge of professional engagements. Two

or three of the young painters experimented in stage setting. She deliberated and listed these artists to Mark while they were driving about the broad city in a hired victoria.

"All nice children and hopeless dabblers, old man. Beware of them or you'll have the house filled with immigrants. Rand's a giant beside any of them."

"The little man ain't so bad. Guess I'll put him in as leading man for a woman in a Scotch play I'm going to work on after Christmas. That'll shut Cora Boyle up. He'll do, all right. I'll offer him the part when I tell him 'Todgers' goes to Cain's."

"To—where?"

"It's a warehouse in New York where dead plays go—the scenery, I mean." Mark pointed to a full wreath of steam floating above the Pan American building, "Watch it go. No wind. Ought to last a minute.—Busted," he sighed, as the lovely cream melted. "But I ain't sorry this happened, Olive. Teach her she don't know so much about the show business. 'Todgers'll' make a little money here because the town's packed full. But I'm afraid Philadelphia'll be its Waterloo. Well, the Boston *Transcript* had three columns on 'Captain Salvador.' It's in the biggest theatre in Boston and they had standing room only last night. Gurdy got a wire from a

kid he knows in Harvard that a couple of professors came out of the woods and told their classes to go see the thing."

His talk came turning back to "Captain Salvador" for the rest of the week. He was bodily listless after the strain of the Boston production. Gurdy forced him to play golf and tramp the spread city when Olive and Margot were at teas in the British colony. Russell often walked and every night dined with them, examining Margot with his sharp hazel eyes so that Gurdy fancied the man exhaling her essence with his cigarette smoke. He sat with Gurdy on Monday afternoon in the smoking car on the road to Philadelphia and observed, "Miss Walling's very much interested in 'Todgers.' How will she take the blow when it fails, here? It'll be a flat failure, tonight, Gurdy. See if it isn't."

"Margot and I are going to a dance. We shan't see it flop."

"It'll flop very flat and hard. I'm a Philadelphian. You should warn Miss Walling."

Mark startled Gurdy by warning Margot during tea in the small suite of the Philadelphia hotel while she stood at the tin voiced piano rattling tunes with one hand. Mark said nervously, "Now, sister, if 'Todgers' is a fluke here—why, I can't waste time and cash fooling with it any

longer." He coughed and finished, "I'll send your friend Dufford a check and—amen."

"You're an old duck," said Margot, "and I'll be good. Shan't ever try to choose another play for you—never, never, never." She tinkled the negro song from "Captain Salvador" tapping one foot so that the silver buckle sparkled. "Wish I could sing . . . Life is like a —what's good old life like, Gurdy?"

"Like a mountain railway."

"That a simile or a metaphor?—I say, I must get scrubbed. Six o'clock."

She passed Gurdy, leaving the room. He saw her teeth white against the red translucency of her lower lip and carmine streaks rising in her face, but her door shut slowly.

"Took it like a Trojan," Mark proudly said, "Guess the Washington papers opened her eyes some. Well, let's go see if Russell's downstairs, Gurd. He's got a room on this floor. Gad, Olive, I wish we were goin' to a dance tonight instead of this—junk."

"Margot should wear something very smart for this dance, shouldn't she?" Olive asked. "The Jannans are the mighty of earth, aren't they?"

"Old family. Steel mills," Gurdy explained.

"I've met some of them in Scotland. Wasn't there a Miss Jannan who did something extra-

ordinary? I remember a row in the New York papers. Didn't she—"

Mark laughed, "Ran off with a married man. They've got a couple of kids, too."

"Doesn't that domestic touch redeem the performance, Mark?"

Mark chuckled and drawled, "Now, here! You make out you're a wild eyed radical and so on. Suppose some girl that ought to know better came and lived next you in Chelsea with a married man. Ask her to dinner?"

"I cheerfully would if I thought her worth knowing, gentle Puritan! If I thought she was simply a sloppy, uncontrolled sentimentalist I should no more bother myself than I would to meet a society preacher or some hero of the Russian ballet who's paid a hundred guineas a night to exhibit his abdominal surface in the name of art . . . Six o'clock. I should tub, myself. I've several cinders on my spine. Run along, both of you."

Mark said on the way to the elevators, "Olive's a wonder, ain't she, bud? Don't know why but she always puts me in mind of your dad. Calm and cool.—Oh, say, tomorrow's your mamma's birthday!"

"It is. And I'm going up to the farm, after lunch. 'Todgers Intrudes' has got me—"

"Shut up," said Mark, seeing Cosmo Rand

ringing the button for the elevator. He beamed at the actor and asked in the car, "Mrs. Rand went back to New York?"

"Yes. Just been talking to her by 'phone. They started the film of 'Camille' today. Very trying, she said. They've some promoted cowboy playing Armand.—I say, I've some quite decent gin in my flask. We might have a cocktail."

Gurdy thought how clever the man was to wear grey, increasing his height and embellishing his rosy skin. He understood dress expertly. At the Jannan dance, toward midnight, a girl told him that she'd just come from a "simply idiotic play" but praised Rand's appearance. "Englishmen do turn themselves out so well."

The dance was supported by sparkling Moselle and Gurdy didn't have to perform with Margot. She found friends. He was summoned to be introduced to a young Mrs. Calder who at once invited him to dine the next evening. Gurdy excused himself on the score of his mother's birthday. As they drove away from the emptying house Margot explained, "Peggy Calder's nice. She was in the Red Cross in London. You're really going up to the farm?'

"Certainly."

She said nothing, restless in her dark cloak for a time then chattered about the Jannan grandeur. She enjoyed spectacles. The great suburban

house and the green ballroom pleased her. "But you people drink too much, you know? Mrs. Jannan's a second wife, isn't she? Rather pretty. Heavens, what a long way back to the hotel!"

"You're tired."

"Frightfully. And blue. . . . Can't you make dad try 'Todgers' in New York, Gurdy?" Directly and with a sharp motion she added, "No. That's utterly silly. I've no business asking it. . . . But I do feel—And yet I don't know the New York taste—You really think it wouldn't do?"

"I really don't, Margot. And you can't get a theatre for love, blood or money. They're even trying to buy theatres to bring plays into. Mark would have to run the play on the road for weeks—months, perhaps, before he could get a theatre."

She dropped the matter, spoke of the dance again and at the hotel hurried up the corridor to her rooms. Mark sat up as Gurdy slid into the other bed of his chamber and passed a hand across his throat, "Oh, son, what an evening! 'Todgers' to the boneyard! Crape on the door!"

"Fizzled? People were knocking it at the Jannan's."

"Awful! Every one coughed. I will say Rand worked hard. No, it's dead. I'll let it run tomorrow night and then close it.—Stick with me

tomorrow. I'll have to break the bad news to Rand."

He broke the news to Rand just as Gurdy was leaving to take the train for Trenton, after lunch. The actor strolled up to them beside the door, a grey furred coat over his arm and his bronze eyes patently anxious.

"Going away, Bernamer?"

"The country."

"Decent day for it. . . . I say, Walling, they weren't nice to us in the papers."

Gurdy saw Mark begin to act. The voice deepened to its kindest drawl. Mark said, "Just called up the theatre. Only sold two hundred seats for tonight and its almost three, now. That's too bad."

Rand passed the polished nails along the soft moustache. The sun of the door sent true gold into his hair. He murmured, "Shocking bad, eh? We play Baltimore, next week, don't we?"

"No," said Mark, easily, "It's too thin. I'll close it tonight.—Now, I'm putting on a piece called the 'Last Warrior.' English. Start rehearsals after Christmas. Good part for you in that. Marion Hart's the lead. Know her? Nice to play with and a damned good play."

"Oh—thanks awfully.—Yes, I know Miss Hart.—Thanks very much, sir. . . . You shan't risk bringing 'Todgers' to New York?"

"No. I'm sorry. You've worked mighty hard and I like your work. You'll be a lot better off in this other play. . . . 'Todgers' is too thin, Rand. Might have done five or six years back."

The actor nodded. "Dare say you're right, sir. Bit of a bubble, really. And awfully good of you to want me for this other thing. Be delighted to try. . . . Yes, this was rather bubblish:—Anyhow, this lets me out of Baltimore. I do hate that town. Well, thanks ever so. Better luck next time, let's hope."

He walked off, grey into the duller grey of the columned lounge. Mark nodded after him. "Took it damned well, Gurdy. He'll be all right in this other show and Cora can't say I haven't been decent to him. Well, hustle along. Got that whiskey for your dad? Give 'em my love. —Look at that pink car, for lordsake! Vulgarity on four wheels, huh?—So long, sonny."

Gurdy was glad that Rand hadn't whined. This was a feeble, tame fellow without much attraction beyond his handsome face. Perhaps it was for this mannerly tameness that Margot liked him. Perhaps that fable of women liking the masterly male was faulty. Margot liked to domineer. She had bullied Rand a trifle at the rehearsal in London. Perhaps Cora Boyle liked the tame little creature for some such reason. Gurdy dismissed him and the theatre. There was vex-

ing sadness in the collapse of even so poor a play. Russell and the actors had worked. It came to nothing. Bubble! Expensive, futile, unheroic evanescence. Margot's fault. He mustn't let Mark do such a thing again. The girl must confine her restless self to dances and clothes. She had looked very well at the Jannan party. She had smartness, instant magnetism. She was still asleep and would dine with her acquaintance, Mrs. Calder, tonight. Gurdy yawned as Trenton foully spouted its industry toward the sky. Bernamer was waiting with the car at the station, gave him a crushing hug and told him that he looked like hell.

"Danced all night."

"I see you did in the *Ledger*. Among those present at the Apsley Jannan's party. Your mamma's all upset about it. Saw a movie of a millionaire party with naked hussies ridin' ostriches in the conserv'tory. She thinks Margot's led you astray. How's this 'Tod' play done?"

"It's all done, dad. Closes tonight."

Bernamer sent the car through Trenton and cursed Margot astoundingly. "Ten or twelve thousand dollars! The little skunk! Cure Mark of listening to her. Say, he still wanting you to marry her, bud?"

"Afraid he is, dad."

"Sure. Next best he could do to marryin' her himself. Funny boy. Likes her 'cause she's pretty. Black hair.—This English woman's blackheaded, ain't she? . . . Well, you sic' some feller onto Margot and get her off Mark's hands. If you fell in love with her again, your mamma'd puff up and bust."

"Again?"

Bernamer gave him a blue stare and winked, wrinkling his nose. His weathered face creased into a snort. "Sure, you were losin' sleep over her 'fore she got back from England."

"Not now, daddy." Gurdy wondered about the absolute death of his passion. His father, who so seldom saw him, knew it was done. Mark saw him daily, talked to him of Margot urgently and saw nothing.

"Well," said Bernamer, "Mark's awful fond of you. And you ain't bad, reelly. Don't you get married until you catch one you can stand for steady diet. Oh, your mamma's gone on a vegetable diet and lost four pounds in two weeks. Ed's got a boil on his neck—bad, too, poor pup. Jim done an algebra problem right yesterday and made a touchdown Saturday. He's got his head swelled a mile."

The man's tolerant dealing with his family impressed Gurdy. Here was a controlled and level affection, not Mark's worship. It was a healthier

thing. He watched his father's amiable scorn while Mrs. Bernamer and the whole household fussed variously over young Edward's inflamed neck after supper. The boil was central in the talk of the red living room. Grandfather Walling tried to think of some ancient remedy and fell asleep pondering. The two bigger lads hovered and chuckled over the eruption. The sisters neglected some swains who came calling. Mrs. Bernamer sat mending the grey breeches of the military uniform Edward wasn't wearing. The boil maintained itself over gossip of the village, the Military Academy and female questions about the Jannan dance. At ten Bernamer said, "Go to bed, all of you. Got to talk business to Gurdy." The family kissed Gurdy and departed. Grandfather Walling's snore roamed tenderly down into the stillness. Bernamer got out the chessboard and uncorked a bottle of vicious pear cider. They smoked and played the endless game. At twelve the telephone bell shore off his father's sentences. Gurdy clapped a palm on the jangling at his elbow and picked up the instrument. Olive Ilden spoke in her most artificial, clearest voice.

"We're in New York, dear. The doctor telephoned about eight and we came up directly. I think you'd best come, Gurdy."

"Mr. Carlson?"

"Yes. He'll be gone in a few hours. Mark's so distressed and—the old man asked for you."

Bernamer said, "No train until three thirty, son."

"I'll get there as fast as I can," Gurdy told her, "Margot there?"

"No. She'd gone to dine with her friend—Mrs. Calder—and Mark didn't want her here. I'll tell Mark you're coming, then. Good-bye."

Gurdy rang off. His father nodded, "Mark'll miss the old feller. Been mighty good to him. Funny old man. Always liked him. Poor Mark! Well, you say this Englishwoman's sensible. That's some help."

Gurdy was glad of Olive's sanity, wished that the thought of this death didn't make his heart thump for a little. His father would drive him into Trenton at two. They played chess again. Bernamer made sandwiches of beef and thick bread. The red walls clouded with cigarette smoke. It was two when the bell again rang.

"Dead, prob'ly," said Bernamer.

The operator asked for Gurdy. There was a shrill wrangling of women behind which a man spoke loudly and savagely. His impatience cracked through the buzzing. It wasn't Mark when the man spoke clearly at last.

"This is Russell, Gurdy. Can you hear? You must come here at once."

"To Philadelphia? What's happened? Mr. Carlson's dying and—"

"I know. And I can't bother Walling. You must come here as fast as you can. Can you speak German? . . . I'll try to talk French, then."

After a moment Gurdy said, "All right. I'll come as fast as I can. Get hold of the hotel manager. Money—"

"The detective's got a check. That's all right. Hurry up, though."

Gurdy found himself standing and dropped the telephone. It brushed the chessmen in a clattering volley to the floor. His father's blue eyes bit through the smoke.

"When's a train to Philadelphia, dad?"

"That damn fool girl gone and got herself into—"

"This actor! . . . Of course she has! Of course! Oh, hell! In her room! When's there a train to Philadelphia?"

X

The Idolater

OLIVE left the telephone table and strolled across the bright library to the fire. The sussuration of dragged silk behind her moving gown gave her a queer discomfort; there had been no time to change in the rush; it seemed improper to attend a death-bed in evening dress. And she was intrusive, here, and helpless. Mark's pain was calm. He would suffer later, at the end of these hours or minutes. The bored, plump doctor came into the library, closed the door and lit a cigarette, joining Olive at the warm hearth.

"He was asking for Miss Walling, just now."

"Ah? She's in Philadelphia. She was dining with some friends at the Ritz, there, so we left her."

The doctor said, "Very sensible," and blew a smoke ring. Under its dissolution his eyes admired Olive's shoulders then, the pastel of Gurdy in a black frame on the mantel.

"Tell me," Olive asked, "how—how far is he conscious?"

"It would be interesting to know. In these collapses we're not sure. His conscious mind probably asserts itself, now and then. The unconscious—I really can't say. Still, before you and Mr. Walling came he spoke in Swedish several times. And that's the unconscious. He forgot his Swedish years ago. Been in this country ever since eighteen sixty-eight. But he spoke Swedish quite correctly and very fast. I'm a Swede. It surprised me."

"Indeed," said Olive and shivered before his science, cool, weary, not much interested.

The doctor looked at his watch, murmured, "Twelve thirty," and tossed his cigarette in the fire. He observed, "But the old gentleman's in no pain. The reversion's very interesting. He was talking to some one about Augustin Daly. Very interesting." The clipped, brisk voice denied the least interest. The doctor went from the library as Olive heard wheels halt outside. This couldn't be Gurdy. She looked through a window and recognized her maid paying a taxicab driver. The black and yellow taxicab trembled behind a car entirely black and windowless; the undertaker awaited Carlson's body. Olive drew the curtains across the glass, shook herself and went down to speak with her maid.

"Margot hadn't come back from her dinner when you came away, Lane?"

"No, m'lady. Such a noosance getting the luggage to the station, down there. . . . Might I have some tea in your pantry, Mr. Collins?" the woman asked Mark's butler as Olive turned away. These two would sit in the butler's pantry drinking tea and discussing deaths. Olive went up the soft stairs and into Carlson's bedroom behind the library. She entered an immutable group. The two nurses sat in a corner. The doctor examined one of the framed, old photographs that pallidly gleamed on the walls made brown by the lowered light. Mark stood with his hands clutching the white bedfoot. His black seemed to rise supernatural from the floor. He was taller, thinner. He glared at the stretched length of his patron. To Olive the dying man appeared more like an exhumed Pharaoh than ever. The yellow head was unchanged. She had a dizzy, picturesque fancy that his eyes might open, that he might speak in some unknown, sonorous dialect of the Nile. As she dropped a hand beside Mark's fingers on the rail the old man spoke without breath in a sound of torn fabric yet with an airy, human amusement. "All right, Mister Caz'nove. Don't git flustered. I'll tell Miss Morris."

Mark writhed. The plastron of his shirt crackled. He gripped Olive's arm and drew her from the room. In the hall he panted, "Augustin

Daly's prompter—a Frenchman—I guess he meant Clara Morris." But in the cooler hall, away from the insufferable bed, he was ashamed. This was bad behaviour, unmanly, ridiculous. He smiled timidly at Olive who suddenly put her hands on his face and kissed him.

"I talked to Gurdy. He'll be here as soon as he can, dear."

"Thanks. Got to go back." Mark sighed, "You go to bed, though."

"No."

Mark didn't want her to go to bed. He smiled and went back to his watch. Odious time passed. The smell of cigarettes crept from the walls and the furniture. Carlson had smoked many thousands here. One of the nurses clicked a string of beads. The tiny cross was silver and lustrous as it swung. The beads seemed amethyst. What good did the woman think she was doing? But she had liked Carlson. She was praying for his soul and Carlson thought he had a soul. Let her pray. The amethyst flicker soothed Mark, took his eyes from the bed. The voice surprised him with his name.

"Mark."

"Yessir."

"It's a poor house. Rain. . . ."

Mark's throat was full of dry fire. He gripped the rail, waiting. But the voice did not

come again. After four the doctor nodded. One nurse yawned. The Irishwoman fell gently on her knees under the large, signed photograph of Ada Rehan in the frilled, insolent dress of Lady Teazle. Olive led Mark quickly from the room into the library. He pressed his hands on his eyes. He wouldn't cry over this. Carlson had too often called him a crybaby, a big calf.

"Dear Mark."

"Oh . . . can't be helped.—God, I did want him to see the Walling! Won't be any funeral. Body goes straight to Sweden. . . . He's left Gurdy and Margot some money. . . . Awful kindhearted. . . . Lot of old down and out actors'd come here. Gave 'em money. Awful kind to me. . . . No reason." His husky speech made a chant for his old friend. Olive's eyes filled. He was childish in his woe, charming. She wished that he'd weep so she could fondle the red hair on her shoulder. This would hurt his pleasure in the new theatre and the splendid play. The butler came in after the heavy, descending motion of men on the stairs was over and the dull wheels had rolled off from the curb. He brought a small, gold capped bottle and two glasses on his tray.

"Doctor Lundquist said to bring this up, sir."

The champagne whispered delicately in the glasses and washed down the muffling, dry taste

from Mark's tongue. He smiled at Olive and said, "Dunno what I'd have done without you bein' here." What a brave woman! Her daughter had died swiftly of pneumonia before Olive could reach her. Her son had been blown to pieces.

"I'm glad Gurdy didn't get here," she said, "He's seen quite enough of death and he was fond of Mr. Carlson."

"Of course. Fonder than Margot was. Bein' a man, though, he never showed it so much."

Olive hoped that Margot would never tell him how she disliked the old man's coarseness, his manifold derisions. She said, "But go to bed, Mark. You really should. These things strain one."

"Awful. They packed me off to Aunt Edith's when mamma died. First time I ever saw any one I liked. . . . Frohman was drowned. Clyde Fitch died in France. Good night, Olive."

He wished she would kiss him again and watched her pass up to her rooms. Then he went to bed, without thinking, and slept. He slept soundly and woke slowly into warm, luxurious sun that mottled the blue quilt. He said, "Hello, brother," to Gurdy who leaned on the dresser between the windows, solemn and grieved in a dark suit, his pale hair ruffled and gay with light. Gurdy must be cheered up. "Well, you

missed it. He didn't have a pain. When did you get here?"

"A while ago. I—dad's here."

"Eddie? Well, that's good of him."

Bernamer came about the bed and dropped a hand on Mark's chest. He said nothing, but grinned and sat down. His seemly clothes and cropped head made him amazingly like Gurdy. Mark beamed at both of them. "Had your breakfast?"

"Hell, yes," said Bernamer, "Had two. Got some coffee in Philadelphia and then Lady Ilden made us eat somethin' when we got here."

Mark swung out of bed and ordered Gurdy, "Tell 'em to bring me up some coffee in the library, sonny. Oh, Margot ain't got here?"

"Yes, she's here," said Gurdy and quickly left the room.

The sun filled his showerbath. Mark cheered further, babbled to his brother-in-law while he shaved and wondered what Bernamer had talked about to Olive at breakfast.

"Oh, we just talked," said the farmer, curtly, "Nice kind of woman."

He leaned in the door of the bathroom and rolled a cigarette in his big, shapely hands. Now that he had five hired men his hands were softer and not so thick. A fine, quiet man, full of sense.

"Awful good of you to come up, Eddie. I

ain't makin' a fool of myself. The old man was eighty. It's a wonder he lasted as long."

"Better get some coffee in you, bud. You look run down."

"Been workin' like a horse, Eddie."

Mark knotted his tie, took Bernamer's arm and hugged it a little, walking into the library. Olive dropped a newspaper and told him he looked "gorgeous" in a weary voice, then poured coffee into his cup on the low stand by a large chair close to the fire. She was smoking. The vapour didn't hide yellowish hollows about her eyes.

"No, I didn't sleep well, old man. Rather fagged."

"We waked you up pretty early," said Bernamer, "Sit down, bud, and drink your coffee."

Mark lounged in the deep chair. Bernamer asked Olive if she had liked Washington but stood patting Mark's shoulder and rather troubled the drinking of coffee. Gurdy came down the blue rug with some mail.

"Look and see if there's anything important, sonny. Probably ain't . . . Hello, sister!"

Margot roamed down the library in a black dress. But she paused yards from his stretched hand and frowned incomprehensibly. Gurdy turned at the desk with a letter against his grey

coat. Margot said, "I suppose Gurdy's told you."

Gurdy thrust his jaw up toward the ceiling. Olive rose with a flat, rasping "Margot" and Bernamer hissed, his fingers tight on Mark's shoulder. Mark set down his coffee cup and looked at them all.

"Oh, no one's said anything?" Margot put a knee on a small chair and stroked the velvet back. "Well, we'd better get it over. I was turned out of the hotel in Philadelphia last—"

"Shut up," said Bernamer, "Shut your mouth!"

She went on, staring at Mark, "I'm going to marry him as soon as he can get a divorce, dad . . . No use trying to lie about it. I belong to Cosmo and—and that's all." She passed a hand over her mouth. Then her bright slippers twinkled as she walked out of the room. Mark blinked after her. Something had happened. He looked up at Bernamer whose face was rocky, meaningless. Gurdy ran to Mark and spoke in gasps, beating a fist on his hip.

"Russell called me at the farm about two—Dad went down with me.—We talked to the manager—We bribed him.—Russell gave the hotel detective a check for a thousand dollars—"

"I guess they'll keep their mouths shut," said Bernamer, "Told 'em they'd each get another check in six months if we didn't hear nothin'.—

Now it ain't so bad, bud. Margot says this feller can get a divorce from Cora Boyle—He was gone and we didn't see him. It might be worse."

"Stop hittin' your leg, Gurd. You'll hurt yourself," said Mark.

He rose and began to walk up and down the tiles of the hearth. One of his hands patted the front of his coat. His face was empty. He seemed wonderfully thin. Olive watched him in terror of a cry. Gurdy and his father drew off against the shelves of still books. Bernamer commenced rolling a cigarette. After a while Mark said, "It's the way I was brought up, Olive."

"Oh, Mark, try to—to see her point of view. She loved him. She sees something we don't—It's—"

"Sure. That's so.—Oh, you're right."

He walked on, aware of them watching, helpless. Things passed and turned in his head. He was being silly, old-fashioned. Ought to collect himself. Ought to do something for Gurdy who wouldn't have her, now. Get the boy something to do. Get his mind off it. "Call the office, sonny. Tell them to close 'Todgers Intrudes.' Give the company two weeks' pay. Have Hamlin write checks—Didn't try to thrash this Rand, did you?"

"We didn't see him. He'd gone."

"That's good. Call the office."

The boy went to the telephone, far off on its desk and began to talk evenly. Mark stumbled over to Bernamer and mumbled, "Keep him busy. Awful jolt for him, Eddie. Takes it fine."

"He ain't in love with her, bud."

"Yes, he is."

"Set down, bud. Better drink—"

"No.—Ain't been any saint, myself. Girls are different.—Maybe he's a nice fellow.—Took it nice about the play being closed.—I'm all right, Olive. Sort of a shock."

He walked on. Then he was too tired to walk and Bernamer made him sit in the chair by the hearth. He stared at the blue rug and it seemed to clear his head. He became immobile, watching a white thread. The world centred on this wriggle of white on the blue down. He lapsed into dullness, knowing that Gurdy stood close to him. He should think of things to say, consolations. The boy must be in tortures. He was dull, empty.

Bernamer beckoned Olive. They went out of the library and the farmer shut the door without jarring the silver handle. Olive found herself dizzy. She said, "You have something to—"

"Let's get downstairs where I can smoke. You're sick. This is as bad on you—"

He helped her downstairs into the drawing room and was gone, came back with water in

which she tasted brandy. The big man lit his cigarette and spoke in a drawl like Mark's but heavier.

"I don't understand this business. The little fool says she's been in love with this feller a long time—a couple of years. He ain't made love to her 'til last night. Well?"

"I don't understand it any more than do you. I'm—horrified. I knew she admired his acting. He's handsome. Very handsome."

The man nodded and his blue eyes were gentle on her. He drawled, "Why the hell didn't he stay and face the music? The manager told him to get out. Mr. Russell says he just packed up and left.—I can't make this out. Margot had Mr. Russell waked up because she hadn't any money to come home with."

"I must talk to her . . . Why did we leave her there?"

"You thought she'd got sense enough to know better. It ain't your fault. I got to go home because I don't want the family to know about this. But there's something damn funny in it.—Will you please get it out of Mark's head that Gurdy's in love with that girl? Make him feel better."

"I'll do all I can."

He said in scorn, "She ain't worth fussin' with," and held the door open. Olive shivered, passing the library where there was no sound. She

climbed to Margot's room and found the girl sitting on the edge of the sunny bed, still, smiling.

"You must be very tired, darling."

The red lips a little parted. Margot said, "Oh. . . no," in a soft whisper. The faint noise died in the sun like the passage of a moth. Olive stood fixed before the sleek tranquillity of the black hair and the contented face. The restless stirring was gone. She smiled in beautiful contentment. The gold cord which was the girdle of this velvet gown hung brilliant and rich about the straight body. The sunny room made a shell of colour for the figure. The hair had a dazzling margin against the windows. She was untroubled, happy.

Olive dragged at her own girdle, biting her lips. She asked, "Where is Mr. Rand, dear?"

"He was coming to New York today," Margot said in the same voice. She lifted an end of the trailing gold, then let it fall. She seemed asleep, lost in a visible dream. But she roused and spoke, "He's loved me ever so long, Olive. I didn't know . . ." and was still again. Olive choked before this happiness, turned and went down the stairs. There was no use in artifice, reasoning. Mark must accept what was done. His good sense would come back, the shock would ease into regret. His convention was outraged, of course. It was dreadful to see him in pain.

Olive thrust back her own pain, a vast and weary disappointment. This wasn't the man for the girl. This was senseless. She entered the library and Mark raised his face from the long stare at the floor, dreading Margot.

"Oh," he said, "it ain't your fault, Olive. Don't cry.—I'm bein' a fool."

He rose and walked again, began a circular tramp about the room. He passed through a whispering tunnel, completely black. He was marching in the dark and knew that Olive and Gurdy watched him, that Bernamer came into the room with his hat in a hand. Yet he walked in blackness. He would go mad of this! She had lied to him. She had thrown herself to a married man. Well, girls did that. Things were changing. People did queer things. He was jealous for Gurdy, that was the trouble. He had wanted her married to Gurdy. She had said such good things of Gurdy.—All this time she'd been lying. She was in love with this pink, married actor. —The talk would roll among the restaurants, in the offices. People would laugh. Awful names! All the other noises would slacken and fail in this whispering. They would sneer when the Walling opened.—She couldn't care anything for him or she wouldn't have lied. Gurdy didn't lie. Mark tore himself out of the black whispering and went to take Gurdy's sleeve.

"Don't you mind, sonny. She—she'd ought to have told you she liked this—"

"Oh, Mark, I don't care about her."

"All right to say that—but don't you mind."

Bernamer came across the room and took Mark in his arms. He said, "Now, bud, don't upset yourself. I got to go home. The fam'ly don't know nothin'. I shan't say a word.—What you do is this. Get hold of Cora Boyle and give her money to let this feller divorce her, see? That'll save talk and trouble."

"That's right, Eddie. Yes, good idea."

Bernamer hugged him and left the room. Mark's head cleared. There was no black tunnel. Eddie was right. He must make the best of this. It could be hushed up. Women like Cora needed money for clothes. He nodded to Gurdy, "You'll never be any smarter than your dad, son. Ain't he a nice fellow, Olive?"

"Of course, dear."

"And I'm bein' a fool. I know it. Only there's lots of men that feel like I do about these kind of things.—One o'clock.—You and Gurdy have some lunch."

Olive said, "Mark, would you like to talk to her?"

He cried, "No!—I—might say something. You folks go have lunch." They went away and at once he wanted them back, walked the floor

with his hands clenched. He was afraid that Margot might come in, now. He dreaded seeing her. He wished her out of the house and away. The wish bit him. He had been fooled. He had to love her, help her. Couldn't she go away? To the farm, where no one knew and—But they might find out. They would shrink from her as bad. They weren't knowing and tolerant like Bernamer. He mustn't stop loving her or let her see that he was hurt. Nothing eased him. The afternoon lagged along. Gurdy played the piano downstairs. Gurdy and Olive drifted in, out, consoling him. It was sunset. A van full of boxes went slowly past the house and the shadows on the pine were amethyst. Some friend of Gurdy's came calling in a yellow, low car that turned ochre as the light failed. Its lamps made ovals on the street as it drove away.—He mustn't let this sour the boy.—In the darker room the whispering began again. It might be the blood in his ears. Gurdy brought him up dinner and white wine. Olive came afterwards and tried to make him eat, lit all the soft lamps. He drank some wine and smoked a cigarette.

"Gurdy takes it well, doesn't he?"

"Perhaps he didn't care as much as you think, Mark."

Mark laughed, "Awful cool outside. No, he's bein' brave to—cheer me up. And I feel better,

honest. . . . My God, Olive, if that woman wants to make a scandal!"

"Don't think of it, Mark."

He was tired of thinking. He said, "I'll try not to," and smiled at Gurdy coming in. But he now thought of Cora Boyle.—Perhaps she liked Rand, wouldn't give him up. He examined the rosy face, the trim grey suits. Yellow haired. Perhaps these dark women liked yellow haired men best. He was afraid of Cora. She could lie to her friends and make things worse. He stared at a lamp a long time and his mind fell dull again.

"Mark, it's after ten. Go to bed," said Olive, "Please, old man."

"You folks go.—Not sleepy."

They left him. He was lonely. He sat by the hearth and lit a cigarette. Above him there was a slow noise of Gurdy strolling about, getting undressed. The ripple of little sounds kept Mark company, then deserted him. Mark shuddered in the peace of the lit room. Something worse would happen. What? He must save Gurdy more pain. The boy was too young for this. Mark's throat ached suddenly and he began to weep, spent in his chair. The lamps of the room swelled like luminous pearls melting and through the mist came Gurdy in white pyjamas that flapped.

"Oh, for God's sake, Mark! Bed!"

"I'm scared," said Mark, gulping, "Gurd, I'm scared of Cora. Suppose she likes him? Suppose she won't let go of him? She's bad tempered, sonny. You don't know her.—It's the talk —the talk. People ain't as broad minded as you and Olive think. The women, especially.—And she's a young girl. . . . It ain't like she was one of these women that've been divorced three or four times. . . . If Cora makes a fuss—"

Gurdy pulled him up out of the chair and gently shook him. "You must come to bed."

"All right.—Making a fool of myself. . . . Only, you're in love with her. It's hard on you."

"I'm not in love with her, Mark!"

Mark thought this a splendid sort of lie but he shivered. "Somethin' else might happen. I feel. . . . Come and get me in bed, son."

He became limply ashamed of himself. Gurdy helped him to strip and he found the boy buttoning his jacket for him as he sat on the edge of his bed. He watched the long, wiry fingers at work on the buttons and the holes of the blue silk. The cold linen of the pillow caressed his neck. He smiled, wanting Gurdy to stay there until he fell asleep. The doorbell rang with a steady and ripping insistence.

"Damn," said Gurdy and went into the hall where the cold air mounting from the opened

door chilled his bare feet. The butler ascended like a shadow on the white wainscot.

"A Mr. Fuller, sir."

"He can't see Mr. Walling. He's asleep."

"He says he must see Mr. Walling, Mr. Gurdy." The butler held out his salver. Gurdy read the card, Henry Fuller. Fuller and Marcovicz, Attorneys at Law. Under the engraving was pencilled, "For Miss Boyle."

Gurdy walked down the stairs into the drawing room. A burly man in a furred coat was standing by the Siennese cabinet running a thumb over the smooth panel of its little door. The light made his grey hair glisten slickly. He turned a broad, pleasing face on Gurdy and nodded.

"Sorry to get 'round here so late at night. Pretty important I should see Mr. Walling right away."

"That's absolutely impossible. He's ill and in bed. I'm—"

"Oh . . . you're his nephew, ain't you? Mister—Bernamer?"

"Yes."

The man nodded and undid his coat. He wore a dinner jacket with a fluted shirt. Gay stones were blue in the soft pleats of the bosom. He stated, "I'm from Miss Boyle—legal representative. You tell Mr. Walling that Miss Boyle's

willing to not bring an action against Miss Walling—Understand what I mean?"

"Yes."

The lawyer continued his air of genial discretion, getting a paper from some pocket. "Miss Boyle's willing to overlook this business in Philadelphia and not sue her husban' or Miss Walling provided that this play's brought into New York by New Year's Day and Mr. Rand is featured—name in electric lights and so on. Soon as the play's opened in New York she'll live with her husban' again. Condonation, see? And—"

"Blackmail," said Gurdy.

The genial man went on, "I've got a memorandum, here. All Mr. Walling's got to do is sign it. I'll read it. N'York City, November eighteenth, nineteen hundred nineteen. My dear Miss Boyle, In pursuance of our agreement I promise you that 'Todgers Intrudes' will be presented in New York City before January first, nineteen twenty and that Mr. Rand will be featured in the usual manner. Yours very truly. —All he has to do is to put his name to that and there you are."

Gurdy hated this fellow. He rubbed a foot on the carpet and sighed, then asked, "What's the good of this? It's a bad play. It'll fail. Why does Miss Boyle want this?"

"Don't ask me. Yes, I hear it's a bum show. I guess she wants her husban' featured. I don't know."

"If Mark—if Mr. Walling won't sign this?"

"Then Miss Boyle'll bring her action in the morning. There's no defence, either, Mr. Bernamer. Miss Boyle's got a written statement from Mr. Rand and testimony from his valet."

Gurdy was sick, now. An unconquerable tremor made the muscles of his back rigid. It was a trap. Margot was caught in a trap. He said, "Blackmail."

"No. Miss Boyle's foregoin' a legal right to bring her action. She ain't askin' a cent of money. There's lots of ladies wouldn't be so easy to settle with. Better see what Mr. Walling says, hadn't you?"

For a second Gurdy stood hopeless. Then he said, "It's a dirty trick," and took the paper. But he should keep cool. He smiled and inquired, "You say you've got a written statement from Mr. Rand—"

"Got a copy with me. Like to read it?"

Gurdy glanced at the transparent typed sheet. He shook his head and walked up stairs. Mark picked up the note as Gurdy dropped it on the blue quilt, read it frowning. Then he flushed and his mouth contracted hideously. He whispered, "Old trick! Happens all the time. I

ought to have known what'd happen. . . . Gimme a pen, sonny." He signed his full name, Mark Henderson Walling. There couldn't be any more pain, after this. He shut his eyes and fell through warm darkness. He could not sleep but he must rest. He slept.

When Gurdy came back into the bedroom, Mark was slowly breathing, sound asleep. The boy made the place dark and went up to his own room. In the upper black of the hall some one caught his arm. Olive followed him and shut the door. She had cast a black fur cloak over her night dress and her grey hair was loose. She looked at the boy without a word, leaning on the door.

"Blackmail. She sent her lawyer. She's got a confession from Rand. Mark's signed an agreement. He'll bring that play into New York and she'll live with Rand as soon as it opens."

"Ah! . . . Oh, the cad! . . . Oh, Gurdy, take care of Mark!"

She walked down the hall. Gurdy followed her and heard her pity crash into miserable sobs behind her door. He stood listening for a while then raised his arm and pressed it against his mouth.

XI

The Walling

ON Saturday afternoon, Olive and Margot started for Seattle. Gurdy drove with them to the station and Margot spoke to him for the first time since the journey from Philadelphia. She said, "What theatre will dad bring 'Todgers' into?"

"I don't know. It'll be hard to find one."

She murmured, "It ought to be a great success," and Gurdy admired her stubborn air. She sat stiffly in a suit of yellow cloth and walked stiffly down the great stairs of the station, gathering eyes, moved ahead of Olive and himself to the coach and stood in the vestibule, motionless, uninterested when Olive drew Gurdy away to the edge of the concrete and raised her veil.

"Mark need never see the child again unless—"

"Oh, he'll be all right," Gurdy decided, "but it's been an awful jolt."

The Englishwoman put a hand to her mouth which shivered.

"Awful . . . Oh, I don't know, Gurdy!"

"Don't know what, Lady Ilden?"

"I don't know that he's right in sacrificing himself. . . . I don't know that he's wrong. Chivalry . . . I can't understand how two people can be such beasts as this woman and her husband. . . . Deliberate torture. . . . Isn't it revenge?"

Gurdy didn't answer but asked, "You'll go on from Japan to—"

"South Africa. I've some friends at Capetown . . . She's that brutal age, when it doesn't matter if we get what we want . . . Oh, my dear boy, this is hideous! It's revenge!"

"I don't think so," he said, "I saw Russell at the office this morning. 'Todgers' doesn't open in Baltimore until Monday. He says that Rand talked to him in Philadelphia before this happened and wanted Russell to persuade Mark to risk bringing the play to New York and that was after Mark had told him he wouldn't bring it in. Russell thinks she—Cora Boyle—is simply crazy over Rand. Russell's seen a good deal of them. He says Rand talked to her by 'phone from Philadelphia on Tuesday. She may have put him up to this. I don't think it's revenge. She's got nothing to revenge. Mark's always been decent to her."

Olive smiled and then whispered, "Do take care of Mark." A porter came bawling, "All aboard," and groups broke up along the train.

Margot swung and vanished into the coach. Olive said, "She's stunned. She won't realize she's been a beast to Mark for a while." Gurdy mumbled something about points of view. The tired woman cut him short with, "Rot, old man! She didn't play fair. She lied. Do take care of Mark. Good-bye."

Gurdy walked away and a clerk from Mark's office brushed by him with a papered load of yellow roses. The boy turned and saw Olive take these against her black furs. She stood graciously thanking the clerk for a moment, smiling. Then she stepped into the vestibule and the train stirred. Gurdy walked on. The colossal motion of the crowd in the brilliant station was a relief and band hammered out some military march by a Red Cross booth. His spirit lifted; the strained waiting of three days was done; Margot was gone; Gurdy wouldn't have to watch Mark's piteous effort at normality. He found his uncle alone in the office at the 45th Street Theatre, studying a model for a scene and swiftly Mark asked, "I sent Jim with some—"

"He got there."

Mark sighed and rubbed his hair. Everything confused him. He hoped Olive would forgive him for not coming to the station. That had been cowardly. He said, "Ought to have gone along, son. . . . Afraid I'd say something I

shouldn't. I shouldn't have let you do it alone. This is worse on you than it is on me. I—"

"Mark, on my honour, I'm not in love with Margot!"

He lied so nobly that Mark wondered at him and brought out a thin chuckle. "You're a card, son! . . . If I didn't know better I'd almost believe you. . . . Well, take a look at this set. That left wall looks kind of dark to me. It's ox blood and it might light up with spots on it. What d'you think?"

Callers interfered. Gurdy went down the stairs into the lobby packed with women who came out from the matinée. All these decorated bodies flowed left and right about a dull blue placard announcing, "Early in December The Walling Theatre will open with 'Captain Salvador' by Stephen O'Mara," and some women paused, drawing on gloves, fussing with veils. A slim and black haired girl stared boldly at Gurdy, passing him. She wasn't like Margot but he hated her for an instant and then stalked up Sixth Avenue where the lights of restaurants roused in the dusk and the crowd of Saturday evening brayed. In ten cool blocks Gurdy captured his philosophy, held it firmly; Mark was unreasonably hurt—in fact, Mark was an old-fashioned, unphilosophic fellow who hadn't progressed, was still a country boy in essence, hadn't even gained the inferior

cynicism of his trade and friends. He was letting himself be bullied by Cora Boyle on an antique concept. Why should he let himself be laughed at and lose money for this immaterial thing? Gurdy succeeded in getting angry at Mark and tramped about the blue library preparing a lecture, saw a glove of Margot's on a table and tossed it into a waste basket. He could imagine Mark shedding tears over that empty glove and its presence in the copper basket fretted Gurdy. He plucked it forth and flung it into the fire of cedar logs where it made a satisfactory hiss, blackening. It must have been perfumed. A scent floated out of the fire. Gurdy grinned over the symbol and poked the remnant which crumbled and was nothing. He stood reducing Margot's importance to logical ash and so intently that he jumped when the butler told him that Russell was downstairs. The director strolled in and looked about the room before speaking.

"Nice walls," he said, "Well, Gurdy, I've just seen Miss Boyle."

"Where?"

"At her hotel.—I'm mixed up in this and I thought I might help Mr. Walling out. So I went to see her and had a talk. It didn't come to anything." He sat down in Mark's fireside chair, stooped his head and brooded, "I'd a sneaking idea that this game was a sort of revenge.

Walling's been good to her—done things for her. That might rankle. Well, I pointed out that 'Todgers' is a waste of time. I did my best to make her see that. It was funny . . . She sat on a lounge and rocked a cushion as if it were a baby—in her arms—Has she ever had a child?"

"I think not."

"And she's ten or eleven years older than Rand . . . It's no good. She thinks he's great in this play and she thinks it'll run all winter in New York. And there we are, Bernamer. She's set on the thing. Mr. Walling had better get it over as soon as he can. If he doesn't, she'll be ugly. I'm mighty sorry."

Gurdy blazed up in a mixture of wrath and impatience, "Oh, it's all such damned rot! Mark's one of the best producers in the country and he shouldn't do this! . . . He should tell her to go to hell. It's blackmail! I'm going to tell him—"

After a moment Russell asked, "What?" and laughed kindly. Gurdy shrugged and flinched before the laughter. The man was right. Mark would go through with the beastly deal, wouldn't consider risking Margot's name. There was no use in argument. He snapped, "Chivalry!"

"And you wouldn't do it?"

"No," said Gurdy, "No! It's too thick. It—is ironical. And he can't tell any one. Every-

one'll think he thinks this is a good play—worth doing. The critics'll jump all over him. They'll—"

"The other proposition being that Miss Walling will lose her reputation? She's a young girl and not very clever or very sophisticated, to judge by her talk. She's read the smart novels, of course. Quotes them a good deal . . . You say you wouldn't do this for her? The world being as it is? Tell it to the fish, Bernamer!" Gurdy felt weak before the cool, genial voice. Russell lit a pipe and went on, "I feel the way you do. Only the world's full of shorn lambs and the wind's damned cold. . . . Can you come to a show tonight?"

"Lord, no," said Gurdy, "I've got to stay with Mark. He's got to have some one with him. Needs taking care of—"

Russell said, "To be sure," with another laugh and went away. He sent Gurdy the notices from the Baltimore papers after "Todgers Intrudes" began its week there and with them a note: "Miss Boyle came down for the opening. She is still sure this is a great play. Maternal feeling. Rand seems nervous and loses his lines a good deal. He is probably ashamed of himself. His English accent peels off now and then and he talks flat Middle West American," but the same mail brought a letter from Olive Ilden, written at Den-

ver, and this maddened Gurdy, as last proof of Margot's inconsequence.

"Dear Gurdy, The reaction has started. She is now certain that Rand planned the whole filthy trick. She is so angry that there is nothing left unsaid. He is a cheap bounder and a slacker etc. An actor can not be anything else, she says. Everything is Mark's fault or mine for leaving her alone in Philadelphia. Do try to pity her a little, old man. She has made a fearful fool of herself and knows it. The whole thing is still horrible to me. I wish Mark had more humour or more cold blood. Anything to help him through. I keep trying to remember a quotation from Webster I threw at his head once. 'These be the fair rewards of those that love.' It may be from Shakespeare. Did you try to argue him out of making the production in New York? That would be your logical attitude. But do take care of him."

Gurdy tore the note up and went to pull on his riding clothes. The frost had melted. Mark wanted a ride in the warm park. The boy thought proudly that Mark hadn't complained. He seemed quietly busy, arranging advertisements for "Captain Salvador" which toured New England after its week of Boston. Rumours of a triumph crept ahead of the play. Its success, its investiture of light and colour would soothe

Mark while he still needed soothing. Gurdy rattled downstairs and Mark laughed at him, "You look mighty well in ridin' things, son!"

"So do you," said Gurdy, in all honesty, and watched Mark beam, settling his boots, the fit of his black coat. They rode into the empty Park. Mark talked about horses and then about Gurdy's brothers. One of them wanted to be a soldier.

"You did that with your scar and all," Mark said.

"Funny how easy a kid gets an ambition. Only thirteen. He'll get over it."

"What did you want to be when you were thirteen, sonny?"

Gurdy strove to remember. He had probably wanted to be a theatrical manager. He said, "I wanted to be a barber when I was nine or ten, I remember that. And then I wanted to be an aviator—and now I want to write plays . . . "

"Hurry and write me a good one, brother."

Then Mark was silent. They cantered along in the creamy sunlight. A great lady of artistic tastes reducing her weight bowed jerkily to Mark from her burdened gelding and called, "Can you bring Miss Walling to luncheon Sunday?" Gurdy saw Mark's mouth twist. It needed courage to call so easily back, "She's gone to Japan." But a hundred yards afterward Mark reined in and stared at the sun, his face tormented.

"Sonny, I may have to open the Walling with 'Todgers Intrudes'. "

"No!"

"Fact. I can't take a chance with Cora gettin' nasty. I can't risk it. And I can't get a house for love or money. I tried to buy the show out of he Princess last night. There ain't a house empty . . . I may have to use the Walling—open it with this—this—" He slashed his crop though the air, was ashamed of himself and sat chewing a lip. Gurdy could keep his emotions so well covered just as he now hid and nobly lied about his heartbreak over Margot. Mark's sense of hurt swelled and broke out, "Oh, women are hell! If they want a thing they'll do anything to get it! They—they scare me, Gurd! When they want a thing! . . . And look how she treated you!"

"Oh, Mark, honestly, I wasn't in love with her!"

Mark knew better but Gurdy's brave mendacity cheered him. He grinned and rode on. He must think of ways to make Gurdy forget the girl. When they reached the house he telephoned the gayest folk he could find and summoned them to a luncheon. He worked in a fever, keeping Gurdy busy with new plays, ritual lunches at the Algonquin and motor trips to country inns where they hadn't been with Margot who somehow wavered in Mark's mind. He began to lose an immediate,

answering picture of her. It was hard to recall her phrases of later time. Things she had said and poses of her childhood rose more clearly. She merged in his perplexed hunt for a theatre. When he found, on the first of December, that he couldn't rent or beg a playhouse for "Todgers Intrudes" he hated Margot for an hour and tramped his library in a sweat of loathing. He must defame the Walling with this nonsense, finish his bargain by dishonouring himself and his dream, for the Walling was not altogether real. He roamed the shell where workmen were covering the naked chairs with dull blue, in a haze. The smell of banana oil and turpentine made him dizzy. The silver and black boxes seemed vaporous like the mist of the ceiling when the lamps were tried on its surface. He had moments of sheer glory through which came burning the thought of Cora Boyle and Margot, in this queer alliance. His offices were transferred to broad rooms by the white landing of the wide stairs in the Walling. There was an alcove for Gurdy's desk and here Mark told him suddenly, "Goin' to bring 'Todgers' in here next week, son."

Gurdy paled, leaned on the new desk and flexed his hands on his fair head. He said, "Oh, no!"

"Got to, son. I've tried all I know."

The boy babbled, "Don't do it! . . . Oh, damn it! You've been working for this place for

years and—It's not worth it! Look here, let me go talk to this damned woman!"

"No. I've got some pride left, son. You shan't go near her. You go down to the farm and stay with the folks."

Gurdy wanted nothing more. All the pressmen and underlings were puzzled by Mark's maintenance of the English comedy on the road. It was not making money. The theatrical weeklies had warned New York how bad was "Todgers Intrudes." Gurdy drove his motor down to Fayettesville on Saturday, had a fit of shame and hurried back on Sunday. On the face of the Walling the dead electric bulbs told the news, "Mark Walling Presents Todgers Intrudes With Cosmo Rand" and Mark's treasurer came out of the white doors to expostulate.

"I don't get this. Your uncle's playin' for a dead loss, Mr. Bernamer. It's no damn good."

"Where is he?"

"Went up to New Haven yesterday. 'Captain Salvador' played there last night. Say, what's the idea? This 'Todgers' ain't done a thing but eat up money. Every one knows it's a frost!" The man worried openly.

There could be no explanation, Gurdy saw. The critics would jeer. Mark's friends would chaff him. The boy patted his wheel and asked, "What night does it open?"

"Wednesday, like 'Captain Salvador' was to. Honest, Mr. Bernamer, this is hell!"

Gurdy drove off to a restaurant for dinner and here a critic stopped him on the sill to ask whether Mark had gone "quite, quite mad?" Monday was barren anguish, watching Mark's face. "Captain Salvador" would play in Hartford and Providence all week. On Tuesday there was a rehearsal of "Todgers Intrudes" and Gurdy found a black motor initialed C. B. when he came to the Walling. Workmen were polishing the brass of the outer doors and the programs for tomorrow night were ready. Everything was ready for the sick farce. On Wednesday morning Mark ate breakfast with heroic grins and talked of playing golf in the afternoon. But he hadn't slept well. His eyes were flecked with red. Bone showed under his cheeks. His black had an air of candid mourning.

"The best joke'd be if the damned thing made a hit," he said.

"I think that would be a little too ironical," Gurdy snapped.

"This is what you'd call ironical, ain't it? Well, I'm going down to the office for a minute. Don't come. Send for the horses and we'll go riding about eleven."

He walked to the Walling, was halted a dozen times and found the antechamber full of people.

Some had appointments. He sat talking for an hour and then started downstairs. But he saw Cosmo Rand on the white floor of the vestibule, slim in a grey furred coat, reading a newspaper. The blue walls of the stair seemed to press Mark's head. He turned back into the office and sent for his house manager. When the man came Mark said, "I'm not going to be here tonight, Billy. Tell anybody that asks I'm sick as a dog and couldn't come."

"All right. Say, sir, would you mind telling me just why—"

Mark beamed across the desk and lied, "Why, this fellow Dufford that wrote this is a friend of mine and he's poor as a churchmouse. I thought I'd take a chance."

The manager shuffled and blurted, "It's a damn poor chance."

"Mighty poor, Billy. Well, the show business is a gamble, anyhow."

Rand was gone from the vestibule. Mark walked seething over Broadway and into Sixth Avenue. He must think of something to do, tonight. He couldn't sit at home. The flags on the Hippodrome wagged to him. He went there and bought two seats. The tickets stayed unmentioned in his pocket all the deadly afternoon. At six he said shyly to Gurdy, "Think you want to see this tonight, son?"

"Might as well, sir."

The "sir" pleased Mark. It rang respectfully. He stammered, "I got a couple of seats for the show at the Hippodrome and—"

"That's good," Gurdy said, "We needn't dress, then."

But Mark sat haunted in the vast theatre, watching the stage. He had deserted his own, run from disaster. The Walling revenged itself. He saw the misty ceiling wane as lights lowered and the remote rims of silver mirrors fade in the corners of the gallery. The glow from the stage would show the massed shoulders of women in the black boxes. Cora Boyle would be sitting in the righthand box. She might wear a yellow gown. He would risk seeing that to be mixed in his dream. It was the best theatre of the city, of the world. He blinked at the monstrous evolutions of this chorus, peered at Gurdy and saw the boy sit moodily, knee over knee, listless from grieving, his arms locked. The time ticked on Mark's wrist—The critics would be filing into the white vestibule where men must admire the dull blue panels of clear enamel, the simple, grooved ceiling and the hidden lamps. The yellow smoke room would be full. He wanted to be there in the face of derision. A dry aching shook Mark. It was like the past time when Gurdy first went to school or when Margot had

gone to England; the Walling was his child. He had desired it beyond any woman. He adored it out of his wretchedness. He pressed his shoulder against Gurdy for the sake of warmth and Gurdy grinned loyally at him. There was no one so kind as Gurdy who began to tell silly tales when they came home and sat on Mark's bed smoking cigarettes. In the morning the boy brought up the papers and said gruffly, "Not as bad as I thought—"

"Oh, get out! I bet they're fierce," Mark laughed, "Read me some."

Gurdy dropped the damp sheets on the quilt, glared at them and dashed his hand against the foot of the bed. He cried, "I don't give a d-damn what they say about the play! They've no right to talk about you like that!"

Immense warmth flooded Mark. He sat up and said, "Sure they have. For all they know I thought this thing was fine . . . God bless you, son!" He wanted to do something for Gurdy directly. "Say, for heaven's sake, brother, those clothes are too thin for winter. We'll run down and order you some. And let's go down to the farm. I ain't seen dad and your mother in a dog's age.—And hell, this ain't so bad, Gurdy. The thing'll dry up and blow away. We'll bring 'Captain Salvador' in. I've had worse luck on a rabbit hunt."

But at Fayettesville where his father asked why Margot hadn't come to say good-bye, Mark was still plagued by visionary glimpses of the Walling, half-filled by yawning folk, the black boxes empty. The flat country was deep in moist snow. Snow had to be considered. Audiences laughed nowadays at the best paper flakes. He talked to Gurdy about it on Saturday morning.

"Pale blue canvas with the whitest light you can get jammed on it. That might work."

"Mark, if you couldn't have scenery for a play would you—"

Mark scoffed, "What's a play without scenery? —Hey, look at the red car. . . No, it's a motor-bike."

A lad on a red motorcycle whipped in a bright streak up the lane and through a snow ball battle of Gurdy's brothers. He had a telegram for Mark from the house manager of the Walling: "No sale for next week. Miss Boyle requests play be withdrawn. Instruct."

"Got her bellyfull," Mark said and scribbled a return message ordering "Todgers Intrudes" withdrawn then another to the manager of "Captain Salvador" in Providence. He told Gurdy, "Now, she can't say a thing. Well, let's get back to town, son. We'll have a lot to do, bringing 'Salvador' in next Wednesday."

His motor carried them swiftly up New Jersey.

Gurdy lounged and chattered beside Mark who couldn't feel triumphant though he tried. The drive had been made so often with Margot and now he saw the child in all clarity, her bright pumps and the silver buckles she so liked stretched on the warmer close to his feet. Her older beauty flickered and faded like some intervening mist. Pain stabbed and jarred him. The snow of the upland gave out. Rain began. When they reached Broadway its lights were violet and wistful in the swirl above umbrellas.

"God, what an ugly town," said Gurdy.

"Ain't it? Don't know what people that like something pretty'd do if it weren't for the shows —and the damned movies."

They dined in a restaurant and another manager chaffed Mark about "Todgers Intrudes" leaning drunk on the table.

"And I hear it goes to the storehouse?"

"Yes . . . but the show business is a gamble, Bill."

"Ain't it? Say, have you seen this hunk of nothin' I've got up to my place? Have you seen it? God, go up and take a look at it! I get a bellyache every time I go near it. Turnin' them away, though. Well, here today and hell tomorrow."

His treasurer came to meet Mark in the glittering vestibule where a few men smoked forlornly

against the blue panels. Mark glanced at the slip showing the receipts and laughed, commenced talking of "Captain Salvador." His force gathered about him. Gurdy strolled away. A petty laughter rattled out of the doors and Gurdy passed in. The lit stage showed him a sprinkle of heads on the sweep of the seats. There was no one in the boxes. Two ushers were rolling dice by the white arch of the smokeroom. A couple of women left the poor audience and hurried by the boy dejectedly. He walked out through the vestibule where more men were collecting around Mark's height and the swift happiness of his face as he talked of next week. Gurdy marched along the proud front of the theatre and turned into the alley that led from street to street. One bulb shone above the stage door and sent down a glistening coat for the large black motor standing there. Gurdy kept close to the other wall. There was a woman smoking in the limousine. The spark made a heart inside the shadow. Gurdy stared and was eaten by rage against her. He stood staring.

The stage door opened. The few performers began to leave. They moved up or down the alley to join the bright motion of the glowing streets outside. Their feet stirred the pools of rain on the pavement. Their voices ebbed and tinkled in the lofty alley. At last a slim man in

a grey coat ran from the door and jumped into the black motor which moved, now, and slid away, jolted into the southward street. Gurdy was moving, too, when other lights woke high on the brick wall. An iron shutter grated, opening, and men appeared in the fissure. They bellowed down to the old doorkeeper, "Ain't them guys from Cain's got here, yet?"

"They ain't to come 'til eleven fifteen."

"Hell, it's after!"

The stage hands cursed merrily. One of them mimicked Rand's English accent to much applause. Then the great drays from the storehouse came grinding along the alley in a steam as the horses snorted. The stage hands and carters swore at each other. The vast screens were slung and handed down. The fleet quality of this failure bit Gurdy. He leaned dreary on the wall and saw Mark standing close to him, face raised to the lights, an odd small grin twisting his mouth. Mark did not move or speak.

He was thinking confusedly of many things. It was hard to think at all. One of the stage hands whistled a waltz that people liked. The melody caught at Mark's mind and drew it away from the moment, forward and back. He hunted justice. Things went wrong. People weren't kind. Next week the new play would glitter and people would applaud. Gurdy

might come to write plays, the best possible plays. He watched the wreck melt. People would forget this. It would sink into shadow. No one would understand but they would forget. It was trivial in his long success. It horribly hurt him. He had been fooled in love. It was laughable. Things happened so. One must go on and forget about them. One of the horses neighed and stamped. A blue spark jetted up from the pavement, above a pool.

"Here goes nothin'," a stage hand yelled, letting down the last screen. The iron shutter closed over the laughter. The carters whined and the drays were backed down the alley. The rain fell silently between Mark the red of the wall making it purple—a wonderful colour. The guiding lights went out. Mark sighed and took Gurdy's arm. They walked together toward the gleaming crowd of the street. Yet feeling this warmth beside him Mark walked without much pain.

THE END

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